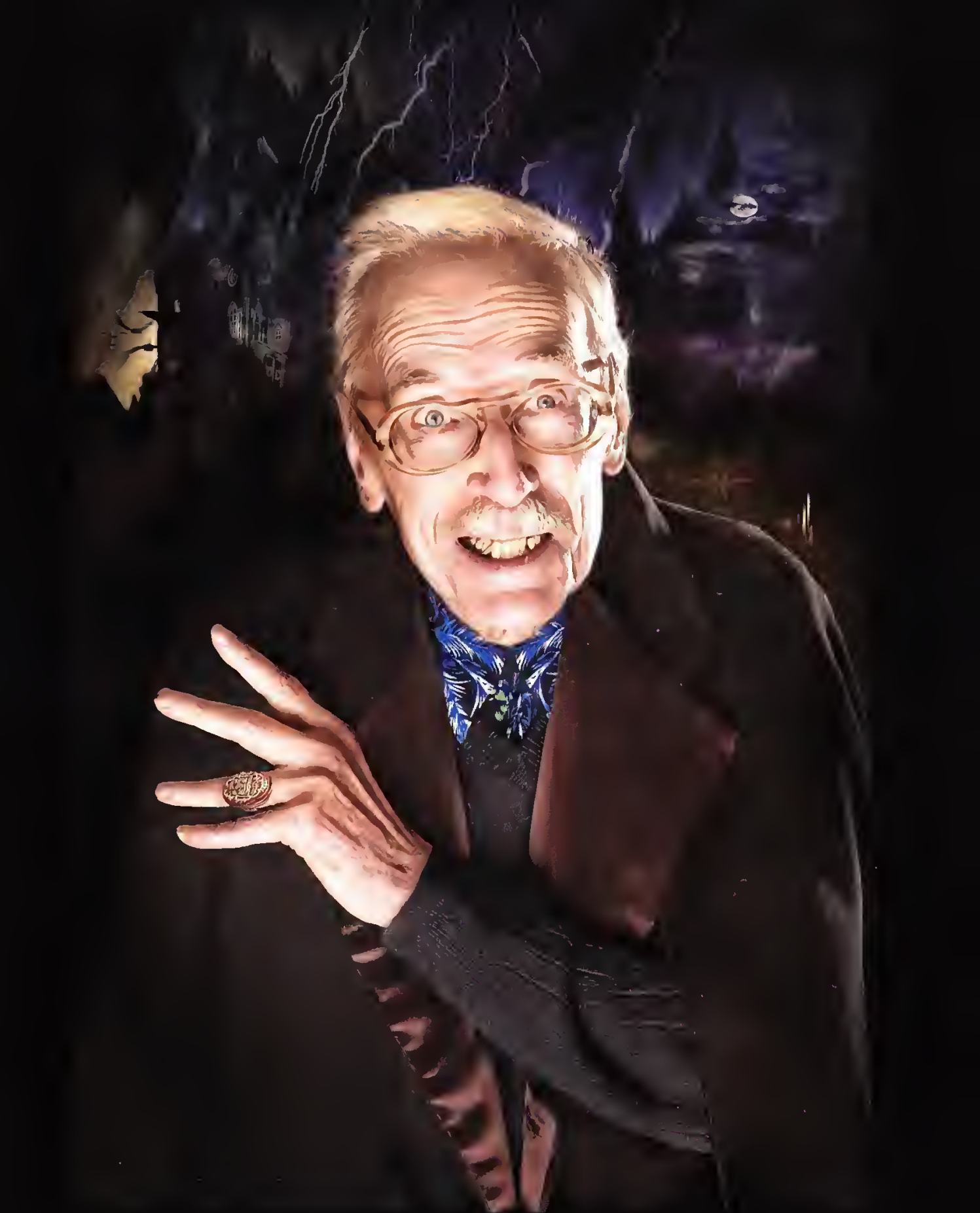

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MONSTER FAN MAGAZINE!


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The Great Ackermonster
Photographed by Russell Maynor 2007

welcome back, monster lovers!

The ink of this page is glue! You have taken your fingers off of your computer keyboards long enough to get them stuck to this magazine!

By the time you read this, I will already be trading puns with Prince Sirki; but don't cry for me Draculina! I have accomplished everything an Ackermonster could hope to. I attempted to grow up with boyhood friends Ray Bradbury, Walt Daugherty and Ray Harryhausen (thankfully, we failed). I straightened out the leaning tower of Pisa, climbed 451 steps of the Great Wall of China and wore the first futurisi-costume to one of the first fan conventions. I've met heroes H.G. Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Fritz Lang and corresponded with H. P. Lovecraft. I have collected and shared hundreds of thousands of precious pieces of imagi-movie memorabilia with a legion of fans. Most importantly, James Warren and I created the foremost monster magazine ever inked! And when we created FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND, *it* created some monsters of its own, like John Landis, Joe Dante, Frank Darabont, Peter Jackson, Tim Burton, Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Guillermo del Toro and *you!* Yes, you, my treasured nieces and nephews are the future of the genre. You must keep the torch burning! Storm the castle! Proclaim that, "Dr. Acula shall not die!"

I have been an atheist all my life so I don't believe in an afterlife. But, if I'm wrong, I'll be remembering all of you to Boris the Benign, Bela the Bat, Chaney the Spider, Cushing, Lorre, Lanchester and a heaven full of Horror, Sci-Fi and Fantasy stars. Regardless, I will have gone to my big sleep with a big smile on my face, knowing that monsters *are* good for my children!

Forrest J Ackerman

November 2008

(This issue is dedicated to my best pal – Mighty Joe Moe. A son among nephews! Joe kept me alive – even longer than I wanted to be! This gentle giant was my constant companion, family and protector over two decades. You brought much happiness to my life and Ghoul-den years, pal. Aloha oe, Joe-y. – 4e)

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Comics legend **RICHARD CORBEN** provides this portrait of Count Orlok for the cover of our retail edition!



For the first time in over 25 years, **BASIL GOGOS** returns to FM with this rendition of Bela Lugosi as Dracula!



Dr. Frankenstein's gruesome creation stelks our retailer incentive edition courtesy of **WILLIAM STOUT!**



VINCE EVANS unleashes e Predator upon the unsuspecting attendees of the 2010 FM Convention!

OPENING WOUNDS

From Forry's farewell to a new beginning.

Forrest J Ackerman was a great part of and participant in pop culture history. Even those who never had the fortune to enjoy *Famous Monsters of Filmland* in its heyday unknowingly benefited from its impact on pop culture. FM was birthed from the vastness that was imagination. It reached out to all those that stayed silent about their immitigable yearning for the strange and creative. It was so ahead of its time, it fostered and encouraged some of the greatest imaginers and creatives of our times and you know who you are. Over the years fandom has nursed *Famous Monsters of Filmland* as a cherished childhood memory and innocent times long gone, but many still remember the reasons why it was so instantly loved.

This brings us to NOW! 52 years later, FM and monster culture have evolved into mainstream and a lifestyle. Our mission has not changed much from 1958 which is to be a conduit for undiscovered talent and future giants while never forgetting the history and people that brought us here. *Famous Monsters* will again touch fandom through treasures, events and partnerships. FM will only entertain the highest of expectations to satisfy the past memories and memories not yet born. And the engine that will drive this indelible mark will be *Famous Monsters of Filmland* Magazine.

So join FM, Basil Gogos, Richard Corben, Bill Stout, Bela Lugosi and Monster Kids not yet known as we usher in the next 52 years.

– Philip Kim

Hi, and welcome to a new era of *Famous Monsters of Filmland!*

If this is your first exposure to FM, you can learn a lot about us by checking out our tribute to the late, great Forrest J Ackerman, the *first* Editor in Chief of this magazine. Forry was full of boundless enthusiasm for what he liked to call "imagi-movies" – an all-purpose term that encompassed the horrific, the speculative, the fantastic – and he saw his mission in life as imparting that enthusiasm to a new audience. That you're holding this magazine in your hands is a testament to his success and his long-reaching influence.

If you're a longtime fan, welcome back! You've probably noticed by now that we've done a little renovating. For the first time ever, FM is in full color, but the changes certainly haven't stopped there. As we get a few more issues under our belts, we'll be revisiting and reintroducing some of our popular traditional features, albeit with a modern twist; for example, this issue we've got a Captain Company section that's not *quite* like anything you've seen in FM before.

For fans old *and* new, our challenge is to fire up that enthusiasm once again – not only for the movies that we love, but for imaginative flights in all their forms. There will never be another Forry Ackerman, but the spirit he awakened will always be with us, and you'll always find it here.

So let's get started!

– Michael Heisler

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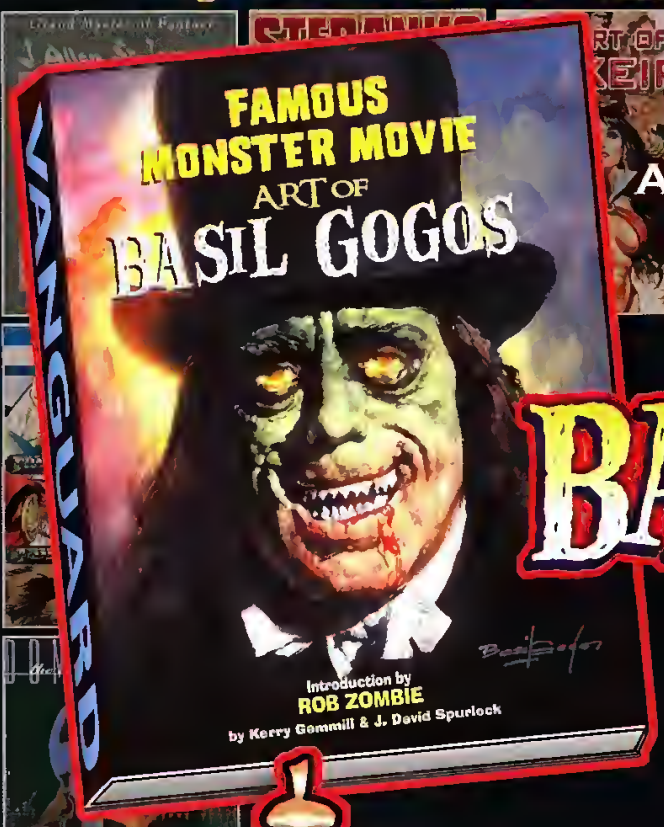
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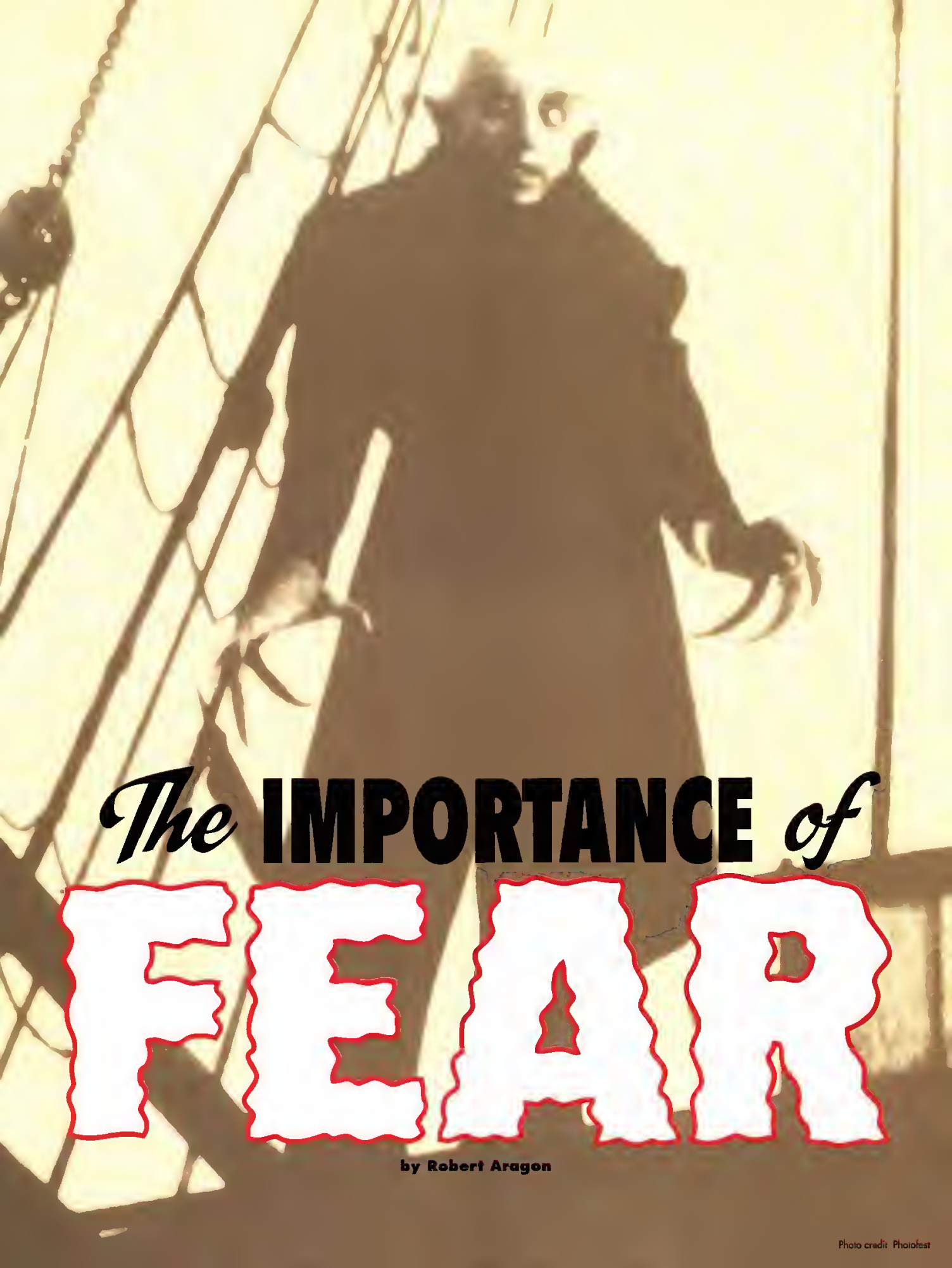
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The IMPORTANCE of FEAR

by Robert Aragon

Photo credit Photofest

All living creatures share a common denominator – the grand finale. Death.

Death, the great equalizer.

Regardless of its form, the casualties of the Grim Reaper are extensive. Yet the emotion attached to it remains a singular one, fear.

Be it fear of pain, desolation, abandonment, the unknown, or simply the eternal life-force extinguishing forever, we view the finality with great anxiety.

As humans, we have and will continue to seek out a meaning to our life, "the truth" of our existence and, most importantly, the search for the significance of life and death. We need life to be of value and our experiences to have had some meaning. We must believe without doubt that we have, in some minute portion, contributed to the eternal story of humanity. We all need to understand death, come to terms with it and, most valuable of all, to not fear death, especially our own.

The emphasis of the search should be placed on the most difficult question to answer: how to live? What does it mean to be fully alive, and to have our senses operating at full capacity, and to possess acute spiritual awareness? How can we feel the rapture of living? How may our experiences on this physical plane affect our innermost being and consciousness?

The answers lie within the rich and varied myths and tales humanity has created... and within that kaleidoscope of symbolic truths, we find a recurring theme: *Memento Mori* ("Remember Death"). Being mindful of death has inspired artistic creations that vary widely from one another, but serve to remind us of our own mortality and, in the process, leave behind fear to pursue life.

Images of death and the macabre produced during the Medieval era were directly influenced by the Black Plague that spread across Europe during the mid-14th century. How could it not influence? The famous Danse Macabre with its dancing grim reaper carried off the rich and poor, the beautiful and ugly alike, no differentiation – "the great equalizer."

The images portrayed by Hieronymus Bosch in his work – *The Garden of Earthly Delight* – from the 14th century, depict the fascination of humanity with the transient nature of life and sensual pleasures, and the inevitability of evil and death. Pieter Bruegel was also intrigued by the Memento Mori theme and depicts it graphically in the Hellscape titled *The Triumph of Death.* And the later Vanitas Paintings from the 16th and 17th centuries continue to document the human obsession to understand good and evil, the impermanence of our life and the certainty of death. The works are full of glorious symbolism: skulls are a reminder of the inevitability of death; rotten fruit, the decay of skin; bubbles, the momentary essence of life; and timepieces, the brevity of life and quick coming of death. Tick... tick... tick... tick.

Clocks were once a potent reminder that our time on earth is short, and it grows shorter with each passing minute. Public



THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS, by Hieronymous Bosch



THE TRIUMPH OF DEATH, by Pieter Bruegel

clocks were decorated with mottos such as "Ultima Forsan" (this may be your last hour) and "Vulnerant Omnes, Ultima Necat" (they all wound, the last one kills). One motto still is in use – a remnant of when clocks told tales – "Tempus Fugit" (time flies). There were many glorious automata public clocks in Europe, where Death would make an appearance to strike the hour… death having the last word over time.

All humans are aware of the torture and tragedy of life. Yet many are not cognizant that life's tortures and tragedies are what lie at the foundation of our fear. Tragedy forces us to ask the ultimate questions: Why are we here? Does life (and death) have meaning or purpose? At the root of tragedy is suffering due to critical miscalculation, ignorance, deceit, guilt or simply the whim of the gods or fate. One thing is certain: the cause of suffering varies, but the purpose remains the same – only through suffering does a person attain wisdom or greatness.

Experiencing tragedy pushes us to reevaluate our convictions, innermost strengths and weaknesses. In any story, the tragic protagonist is always a hero, not the bearer of lost opportunities, since the point is not to win or lose, but to have the courage and fortitude to withstand the destiny handed to him by the gods and fate.

Tragedy also has its comedic counterpart. For within the suffering and chaos of tragic storylines and life circumstances, there is space for the absurd and ironical. Tragedy and comedy truly do move precisely in opposite directions while on the very same plane. If tragedy is a constant descent from



***Vanitas* still life by Pieter Claesz**

a peaceful posterity toward suffering and chaos, then comedy is a repetition of that descent. To descend, then ascend... then descend, then ascend. Now that is comedic perfection. The Harlequin (and his mask) symbolizes the close nature of tragedy and comedy; the use of the Harlequin and his mask was to break up the tension of the action and remind people to laugh despite, or, more appropriately, because of their fear and anxiety. Clowns, being the personification of grand comedy, sprang forth in literature in the 15th century's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* by Marlowe. They assert their comic flare on poor Faustus as he descends toward his damnation – which is, without a doubt, the moment for a good laugh. It is apparent, in tragedy we are a participant; while in comedy we are mere spectators. From Marlowe to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* (written circa 1601-1606), the strategic combing of the tragic and comic into one plotline indicates that in the best stories and art, they are two parts of one whole and integral to each other. These stories represent the continuum of humanity's fascination with the tragic and comedic, and fears of life and death.

During the last 300 years, humanity's myth builders – the poets, artists and writers – have been dealt a crippling blow by the rational pursuit of scientific knowledge. As Copernicus removed the Earth from the center of God's universe, Sir Darwin stripped us of any divine origin, and Freud left us shallow victims of the subconscious, the artisans lost the mystical and sublime. In the afterglow of the great age of enlightenment with its science and reason, the question of life and death and the uncertainty of one's place in the universe had not been appeased.

As expected, artisans, philosophers and poets rushed to douse the burning question of doubt. Rising from this fear and from the vampiric grave is a feast of undead poetry, such as 1748's *Der Vampir* by Ossenfelder, 1797's *Bride of Corinth* by Goethe, 1819's *The Vampyre* by Polodori and my personal favorite: 1839's *Sem'ya Vurdalaka* ("Family of Vourdalak")



THE NIGHTMARE, by Henry Fuseli



SATURN DEVOURING HIS SON, by Francisco Goya

by Aleksey Tolstoy. The latter prose was the inspiration for the unsettling and horrifically sublime short film *The Wurdulak* featured in Mario Bava's 1963 masterwork *Black Sabbath.*

In the visual and literary arts, works featured a new interest in the sexual and the violent. Such horrific delights as Fuseli's 1782 *The Nightmare* and Goya's Black Paintings of circa 1819 (particularly *Saturn Devouring His Son*) seem to best express the spiritual concern of the time. We are visited by Demons as we slumber and shall be consumed without protection. Munch's 1893 work *The Scream* summarizes our fearful agony of displacement in a world without a deity to worship or blame. Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula,* although not original in its vampiric theme, was one of the first novels to celebrate society's obsession with love and sex, violence and death.

From the late 18th century until the mid 19th century, a wave of romance influenced the arts. The romantic age ushered in a search for emotions depicting the hero as the Common Man, often in the melancholic and tragic. Mary Shelley's 1831 novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* is a prime example of literature during this time period. By using the Promethean myth as a moral and scientific allegory, Shelley captured the emotional essence of humanity and art at the end of the scientific revolution. In great contrast, the complexity of the human soul was brought to light in Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), Gaston Leroux's *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* (1910), Robert Stevenson's 1886 novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and the brilliant 1890 Oscar Wilde novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Both of these latter tales return to the question of the duality of man and the internal fight between heaven and hell, good and evil and life and death. To quote from Dorian Gray: "Nothing can cure the soul but the senses, just as nothing can cure the senses but the soul… Man is half angel and half demon."

As the gray thundering clouds of the Great War settled in 1918, German expressionism rose from the ashes to further explore the psychology of fear and the duality of man. The silent silver screen reflected shadows of sharply angled, disorienting, twisted and disjointed sets, as if remnants of the War, unleashing such terrors as Murnau's *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens, Der Golem, wie er in die Welt Kam* and *Das Cabinet de Dr. Caligari* upon the world. Undoubtedly, the terror of war fueled a prominent artistic movement in post-war Germany that literally gave psychological states a shadowed shape and form.



THE SCREAM, by Edvard Munch



Paul Wegener as the title role in THE GOLEM (1920), directed by Wegener himself!

Yet the classic tales of terror brought to the screen, in particular by Universal Studios, brought forth a mythological realm rivaling that of ancient Greece. In a ritualistic manner, we enter the darkened theater and we transcend our common life into a world where deities (werewolves, man-made monsters, living mummies and the like) interact with humans. There we learn that in our difficulties, the pain seems more bearable, for our trials have meaning; we are suffering for a larger cause, a greater purpose. When we witness on the screen a particular "deity" experience something which we are currently enduring, we can feel that our own struggle might have a similar cosmic or archetypal significance. Film writers and directors from the Golden Age of Hollywood were certainly influenced by the tragic Greek myths and plays, which have provided the plot-line for many monster movies. Curt Siodmak, for example, is said to have based the story for George Waggner's 1941 *The Wolf Man* on the Greek idea of harmatia – that humans must endure the whim of the gods. Another case in point is the last "serious" Monster Film, *House of Dracula* (1945); its working title was *Destiny,* an influence of the screenwriters' knowledge and affection for Athenian tragedies. We love these stories regardless of whether the hero wins or loses, because they search beyond their limitations to grasp the unattainable. We rally with their lost cause and admire their conviction and undaunted and uncompromising spirit, regardless of the painful fact that we know their actions shall cause brevity of life.

The old myth writers believed in the imagination and the possibility of greatness. With today's focus on rationalism, the profit motive writers will no longer write stories that require much imagination, appreciation for the subtlety of image and language or depth of feeling. The ancient and classical myth writers, poets and artists were a small but significant part of a much larger reality, the eternal story of humankind. Thus the images and words that emerge from the tragi-comic tales of old are about mortal actions that encompass forces which transcend the individual. By depicting life and death as a great mystery beyond our human understanding, these works served to remind us to accept our temporal existence with

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Conrad Veidt as Cesare the Sleepwalker and Werner Krauss as the insane doctor in THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI (1920).



Lon Chaney, Jr. and Evelyn Ankers in THE WOLF MAN (1941).

grace, humility and gratitude. Contemporary man with his science and skeptical reasoning has conquered imagination and any belief in unseen realms. Ironically, by banishing mysticism from the universe, humanity has diminished rather than increased in significance.

The imagery of this terror-laden mythology is symbolic of the spiritual and emotional powers within each of us. The mythological characters – ancient, classic and modern – represent the finest attributes of humanity, but also loneliness, death, despair, displacement, fear, evil and the darker archetypal facets of life. Most appropriately, the "monsters" are personifications of those recognizable facets, and, at the same time, have become a talisman against evil itself. We have befriended the face of fear and in doing so, we have accepted, to a minor degree, our own mortality. Regardless of the duration of our existence, for man or woman, these horrific metaphors speak, educate and introduce us to our very own inner world, a sacred place. This is a place where you can bring forth what you are and what you might be. For centuries the poets and artists have offered expressions from their personal sacred place of creativity, and they have gifted humanity with tangible manifestations of fear identifiable to all of us, with one unmistakable message: *Vita est Brevis, Ars est Longa* – life is brief, but art is forever.



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TO CREATE A PREDATOR

by Jenna Busch

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Horror fans went mad with the news that Robert Rodriguez was producing a sequel to the 1987 film *Predator*. In the film, a group of cold-blooded killers are abducted and deposited on a game reserve planet, to be hunted by Predators. Starring Adrian Brody, Topher Grace, Alice Braga, Danny Trejo and Laurence Fishburne, the film will ignore earlier attempts at sequels and feature a number of different types of Predators. *Famous Monsters* was lucky enough to speak to KNB EFX founder Greg Nicotero who designed the creatures, Derek Mears (*Friday the 13th*) who plays Classic Predator and actor/effects artist Carey Jones who plays Super Predator. We got a bit of insight into the new design, wearing the suits, working with director/fanboy Nimrod Antal and how practical effects and CGI get along famously in the film.

From the moment the film was announced, the look of the new Predators was the topic of discussion online and in fan magazines. Nicotero told us that Rodriguez gave him the perfect way to think about it, telling him, "If the classic Predator is an 8-Track tape, the new Predator is an iPod." Nicotero said, "We went back to the original, classic look. You know, the Predators have changed, the design has changed, as time has gone on, and one of the things that was important to Robert and Nimrod and I was that we go back to the classic Predator from the original movie. You know it's funny, when you watch – when you see a movie where one character shows up, ten years, fifteen years, twenty years later, if it's an actor those actors have aged: their hair's different or maybe they're a little heavier. It's like looking at Sean Connery in the original James Bond movies, and then seeing Sean Connery in a later Bond movie, and you go 'Yeah, it's still James Bond.' Sean Connery's a good example, because you see him and you say 'It's still James Bond, oh.' But what was fun about doing the Predator was that the Predator doesn't really age, because it's a character. When you go back, when we walked on set with Derek in the classic Predator suit it was like we had gone into a time capsule."

Mears understands fan hesitation when presented with a new design, but he assures us that it looks amazing. "When I first saw the designs that KNB did, I was so overwhelmingly excited. Because a lot of times you hear 'Here's a new version of a classic character, but it's so much better!' As a fan I'll sit there on the internet and think, 'Uh huh, sure. I don't believe you, prove it.' So when I heard they were doing a different race of Predators, I was like, 'I don't know about this…' So when I first saw it I told Greg that, as a fan first and foremost, 'This looks amazing.' I would sit there in the trailer when I wasn't working and stare at some of the other guys in their Predator outfits, and just look at the detail, and go, 'How did you do that?'"

Jones agreed. "I liked the fact that – in essence – it goes back to the original movie. They're much more sleek, and you can see their shape and their body tone, and they're very stretched out and taller, which I felt like, probably since the first film you'd kind of lost a little bit of that. I think they got too much into bulking them out and adding too many pieces on them, and you





Two faces you WON'T see (without masks, that is) in PREDATORS – Derek Mears (above) and Carey Jones (below).



Isabelle (Alice Braga) looks on while Royce (Adrien Brody) attempts to determine whether a disembodied skull with a hole through it is a good sign or a bad sign.

lost the Kevin Peter Hall style, where he's really tall and very lean and his body shape and muscle tone show through the suit, and you can see more of the performance that he did. So I was very excited when I saw the initial designs, that it went b ck to that."

While they stuck to the original design for the classic Predator, they did create a few new ones. Nicotero explains, "Each Predator has a different personality. We referred to them, we had names for them, specifically because in our mind, they all had different functions. We had our lead berserker Predator, which we referred to as 'Mr. Black'; he was kind of the leader. And then there were a couple other Predators; we had one that sort of handled the dogs and used the dogs as his primary tool. You know, Nimrod was really specific about wanting all these Predators to utilize classic hunting techniques. So when the alien dogs show up, the whole impetus is that the Predator is using the dogs to flush our their prey, and determine who's strong and who's weak, so they can pick them off and also test them. There was another Predator called 'The Falconer,' and he had a UAV, sort of like a flying robot that he used to track the humans from the sky. So each of these guys has a different personality based on the techniques he uses to hunt."

Wearing a suit poses some serious difficulties for a performer. They're hot when it's hot, and because the material doesn't breathe, they're cold when it's cold. And these actors have gone from extreme to extreme, filming in the heat of Hawaii to a winter in Austin, Texas, that had record-breaking cold spells. Greg talked about choosing the right performers for the job. "These guys have to know how to perform, and it is an art form to be able to act in this suit... their vision is limited, their footing is limited, but they have to perform. And it's not just standing there, or smoking a cigarette; they have to fight, they have to bring these characters to life, you know? Half of our battle is building convincing and compelling creature costumes and creature suits, but the performers are critical, and you know, I basically hired the performers in the suits, because I knew that it was important that we had guys that could perform in the suits."

Jones, who played the Super Predator and did stunts for a few of the others continued. "It definitely takes a special type of person that a) obviously isn't claustrophobic, and b) is in pretty good physical shape, and c) can kind of control their temperature and kind of contain themselves, because yeah, you put the suit on and it's basically skin tight. I mean it's sculpted on my body for so it fits almost like a tight

Photo credit: Rico Torres



Digital concept art from KNB EFX showing detail of a Predator helm designed for the new movie.

spandex suit...it definitely contains your body heat...I try to almost meditate to try to control my heat so I don't overheat, or get overly exhausted. It basically feels like you're working out with elastic hands, because it's a stretchable ruhher, hut every time you'd move your arms or lift your legs, doing any of your actions, it's like you have a few pounds of pressure against yourself... once you have the outer mask on, basically it's tunnel vision. So, for me, whenever I had to do a motion, or a move, or run, it was a matter of... I would have the mask off and I would survey my surroundings, so I knew, I had to remember that 'Okay, there's a tree limb here, there's spikes here, there's bones here,' whatever, so I knew my surroundings and my parameters. So when I would put the mask on it was more memory for me. I could see directly in front of me, I saw the actor that I was performing with, hut then at the same time I had to remember 'Okay, I can't go too far to the right because I'll run into a tree, or I can't go too far to the left because there's a drop off.'"

Mears talked ahout how, ahem, close you get to the people who help you in and out of the suit. "I feel had for the guys at KNB who have to help me... hecause if you're taking a nap and the drool comes out of your mouth and onto your face, it's gross, but it's still *my* drool. I'm not the person that's laying next to somebody drooling on their face, it could be a huddy of yours... It's very intimate. So they know your smells, they know how much you sweat. You try to be polite and not eat things like lamb or garlic the night hefore, hecause it comes through the pores. They disinfect the suits and they don't want to complain, they handle it like professionals, hut you come out of the suit wet and soaked and – they're a little soaked also. It's pretty gross. I always feel like I've made a mess of somehody's house." It's impossible not to look at these suits and wonder how one answers the call of nature. After all, the actors are in these things for half the day. Mears laughed, saying, "I have a deal, every time I do acting roles that require full body prosthetics or suit work, I always make sure there's a zipper in the personal area for quick escape – I don't know if I should even talk about this. You have no idea how difficult it is to relieve yourself with giant Predator claws, it's kind of like playing the game of *Operation*. I can't imagine what it sounds like outside your trailer, because you're leaning at really strange angles and you're reaching and, the worst is if there's a malfunction somewhere and you have to go and ask a buddy from the shoot, and go, 'Hey, remember how good our relationship is? We're going to go to the next level – we're going to have something to share. The next level of honding, you and I.' 'What do you mean?' 'Can you zip me up, by chance?' 'Uh, yeah, all right.'" I wondered if that meant he had to buy them drinks for the rest of his life. He said, "Yeah, it's completely true. And it's weird, because I get amused – I try to make it more uncomfortable. 'When you zip me up, could you look me in the eye when you do that? Could you hum something? More mellow, more romantic.' 'Shut up!' The one thing about KNB, what I like about working with those guys is that it's a family environment, you feel like you're working with your friends."

One thing that all three made very clear was how much enthusiasm director Nimrod Antal hrought to the project.

Jones told us that, when the take went well, he had a favorite phrase for the actors and the crew. "The take that he was super-excited about he would yell 'Pancakes!' and the take that he was *extremely* excited about, he would start to put toppings on it, like blueberries, or whipped cream, or bananas, so, yeah… if it was 'Pancakes!' you did good, if it was 'Pancakes with blueberries and whipped cream on top!' you knew that you'd nailed it."

"Nimrod's enthusiasm really kept the crew going," Nicotero told us. "The irony was we started shooting the picture in October, in Hawaii, so we were all hot and sweaty, and we ended in January, in Austin, outside where we were all freezing to death. It was a long shoot, and we had a tremendous amount of action, and a tremendous amount of stunts, and we had creatures fighting each other… so, Nimrod's enthusiasm was infectious and really kept everybody focused." Jones added, "He's a true fan. There were times when I'd literally go into his offices to have a conversation, or just to tell him how excited I was to work with him, or that he inspired me to do certain performances – he would have model kits of Predators in there, he would have old-school grabs from the original movie. And every time he would see me in the suit, you could just see the look on his face, that he would revert back to childhood. He would just sit there and stare at me like, 'Hey, wanna take pictures?'"

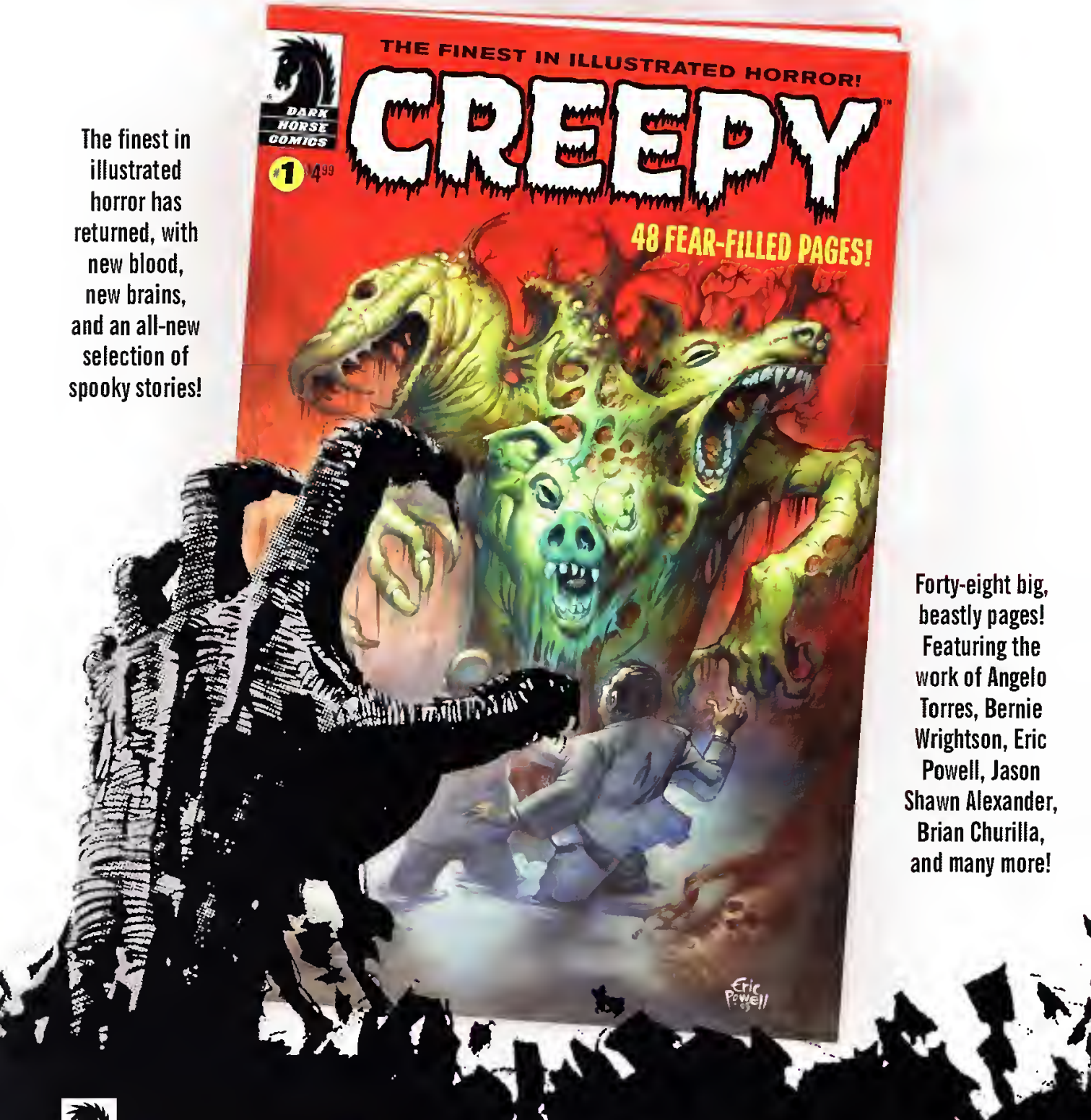
Mears agreed. "Nimrod is good people. There was many a time when we would sit there and talk fanboy talk. He and I would talk about the new *Batman and Robin* comic book or talk about video games and Playstation 3, and production would come over and go 'Uh, Nimrod, you need to go set the next shot up.' 'So Robin, the Damien character is really – oh? Oh, Derek, I've gotta go set this up. I'll be right back. We'll continue the conversation.' He is really, really cool. And his enthusiasm is so contagious. There were times that he would just scream out, like a fan, 'Yeah baby!!! That's what I'm talking about!' At one point I was like 'There's a 10-year-old fat kid named Nimrod with a Predator poster on his wall losing his mind right now.' Man, I like him a lot."



Predator and – Predator's Best Friend? Original concept art, courtesy of KNB EFX.

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KNB concept painting of a lean, mean, new Predator "warrior."

Mears was also impressed with the casting choices, particularly that of Adrien Brody, something many fans were surprised about. "[Adrien Brody] is a phenomenal actor – that can't be contested, we all know that – but having Robert and Nimrod go opposite of [Arnold] Schwarzenegger, not having the big giant muscular guy, but having more of a Bear Grills character, like 'Man vs. Wild' or 'Texas Survivalist' where he's still a badass, but he doesn't have to be overly muscular... I think a lot of that comes from the cage fighting, the Ultimate Fighting, because in the past, in the 80's and early 90's, it's all like the bigger the better, I'm going to be a gigantic monster that you won't be able to fight, and they had these steroid, wrestler-looking bodies. And they found out with the different generations of Ultimate Fighting, when you break it down into weight class, you don't need to be huge, so our action stars are changing."

Since we were talking to Nicotero, the founder of an effects house, Jones, an effects artist and suit actor, and Mears, star of *Friday the 13th* and veteran of a ton of effects movies, we couldn't resist asking about CGI versus practical effects in *Predators*. Nicotero said, "People have to just stay true to what their vision is. And we've been really lucky. And one of the best things about *Predators* that Robert himself said was, 'Hey, this isn't a big CG movie. This is a creature film with animatronics and guys in suits.' And he really wanted to maintain the feel. When you're on set and you're looking around and you see a couple of guys running through the shot with a grey ball or a green ball, or, you know, a big ball on a stick for reference, versus standing there on set and seeing your actor walk in in a 7½-foot-tall Predator suit – there's such a dramatic difference in terms of the feeling. And Robert and I even joked one day, because he thought it was really interesting that, he said, 'Dude, I love that there are Predators running around my studio!' You could look out the window at the back of Troublemaker Studios, and there would be Predators moving through the parking lot towards set or something. But there's a big difference. And a lot of people don't realize the nature of being able to be on set with something physical and something practical. That gives you a better performance. That gets the crew excited about what they're doing because they see it, they share that moment with you. When you walk on set with this really great creature or this really great character that you've created, people come up and comment on it, or you've got guys running up and saying, 'I want to get my picture taken with it!' You know, that sort of enthusiasm for seeing practical stuff is infectious."

Jones agreed. "In my opinion, just from experience in watching different movies that I like, you can definitely tell the difference when there's something practical there that they're actually interacting with, as opposed to when it's done on a blue screen with a ball, or when they have to pretend that something was there. I definitely think there's a place [for CGI] for some things – stunt-wise, if you had to do something where somebody had to fly in the air and flip fifty times, you know, stuff like that, but when it's conceivable to do it practically, it definitely has a better end product when



KNB concept art of a Predator "boar." Probably NOT a vegetarian.



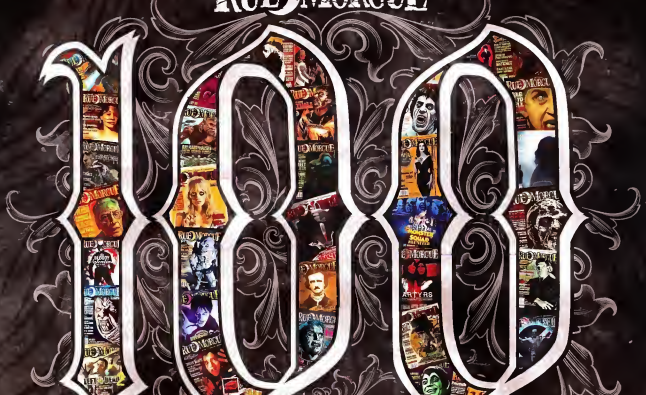
Digital art of one of KNB's new Predator designs.

you have something physical there to impact with, or collide with, or trip over. On this film, I was very, very, very excited because their intention was to only use CGI as a tool for things that they needed it for, and it totally was going to be a live-action performance. They were really going to use our performances, and that really made me want to do the best that I could to provide that for them."

Mears talked about the performance aspect. "You need a human actor there, in my opinion, because the philosophy of monster acting, of wearing a mask, of being a professional actor and doing that... if you get a big guy and put a mask on him, that's all you're going to get. You have to have that, I believe, that energy, and if you're actually in the moment that energy will transfer through. Though you can't really see it or tell that it's there, it's still there. That's why, when you watch a CG movie and the monster comes out and it's completely CG, you're like 'Oh, I'm watching a video game,' because there's no energy there to tie it to. But if there's a guy there, and he's committed to what's going on, then you get that energy from that... you marry the two approaches of practical and CG together, it's phenomenal."

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BADASSES, BULLETS AND A BODY-BLASTING BEAST:



A LOOK BACK AT THE ORIGINAL PREDATOR

by Steve Bunche

PREDATOR ™ & © 20th Century Fox Film Corporation. Photo credit: 20th Century Fox/Photofest

The 1980's can be looked back upon as a golden age of action/adventure films populated with muscular, taciturn he-men whose actions spoke more eloquently than words, and each punch or roundhouse kick was emphasized with a hail of bullets and groan-inducing one-liners. Eighties cinema was rife with "cops on the edge," stealthy mercenaries, then-exotic ninja, whitebread Americans proficient in martial arts, and heavily armed Vietnam veterans, and looming like a colossus among this manly brotherhood was Arnold Schwarzenegger.

A Teutonic titan who rose through the ranks of competitive bodybuilding to embark on what at first seemed an unlikely career as a leading man in major motion pictures, Schwarzenegger swiftly established himself as a muscular, thickly accented *ubermensch* in 1982's *Conan the Barbarian* and its 1984 follow-up, *Conan the Destroyer*. But it was 1984's *The Terminator* that came from out of nowhere to kick audiences and the box office up their collective backsides, and catapulted Schwarzenegger to the Hollywood A-list (along with director James Cameron), setting him on a decade-spanning run of macho heroic roles (while admirably never bothering to lose his accent). While the low-budget sci-fi action flick went on to set the new benchmark for ultra-violent fare during the Reagan era, the floodgates were opened by *The Terminator*'s surprise success. Films seeking to up the beefcake-and-bullets ante rolled off the studio assembly lines, but none captured the originality and well-crafted thrills of *The Terminator*, largely because those cranked-out cash-ins lacked directors as creative as Cameron and stars as charismatic as Schwarzenegger. That is, until the unleashing of *Predator* in June of 1987.

Predator arrived from out of nowhere to punch audiences in the head with its tale of a crack mercenary team whose mission in a South American jungle turns into a living nightmare upon finding themselves stalked hy an extra-terrestrial big game hunter (Kevin Peter Hall) that collects human trophies, a task made simpler hy its utilization of advanced precision laser devices and armor that grants it invisihility. Headed by a ripped-and-ready Schwarzenegger as "Dutch," the team is packed to the gills with texthook examples of hulking and sculpted action figures made flesh, including, among others, Sonny Landham from *48 Hrs.* as the Native American tracker, professional wrestling legend Jesse "The Body" Ventura as a Red Man-chawing good ol' boy with an enormous rotary machine gun, Bill Duke (late of 1985's *Commando*, which starred Schwarzenegger), and Carl Weathers, best known as



Director John McTiernan and star Arnold Schwarzenegger on the set of the original PREDATOR (1987).

Photo credit: 20th Century Fox/Photofest



Hunters, soon to become hunted: (L to R) Sonny Landham, Carl Weathers, Schwarzenegger, Richard Chaves.

Apollo Creed from the *Rocky* series. An assemblage of that magnitude was required to bear even the slimmest chance of matching wits and skills with a seven-foot alien killing machine with a propensity for skinning its human prey and graphically ripping out their skulls, the spinal columns still attached for visual shock value.

Playing like an R-rated and unusually intense episode of *G.I. Joe*, Arnold and his men, accompanied by a female South American guerilla fighter (Elpidia Carrillo), wage war against the titular threat in a lush jungle expanse that is simultaneously limitless and confining to the commando unit. Slowly, agonizingly, the Predator whittles the team down one by one until only the battle-hardened Schwarzenegger remains to meet its challenge, in a style worthy of a hero straight out of ancient Greek mythology. Dutch's antecedents among the old-school Greek heroes triumphed over the most unspeakable and horrific of monsters after untold perseverance and suffering by using a combination of their hard-earned skills, god-given weapons and sheer courage. While Arnold's Dutch does not have the literal *deus ex machina* of divine ordnance, he does possess know-how born of elite military survival training and guerilla warfare training, as well as experience gained through missions in the world's most volatile of combat zones. Thus, he brings a hardened thinking-man's savagery to bear against the alien's "fishing with TNT" approach. That combination of all-too-human, flesh-and-blood physical give-and-take and the desire to see a mere man win out over a clearly overmatched opponent – whose tactics of invisibility and alien gizmos read to audiences as an upgraded form of cheating – resonated with viewers and Dutch's victory was one shared by enthusiastic ticket buyers.

From its description, one might think that *Predator* emerged with all the earmarks of a standard explosion-punctuated and mostly brain-dead 80's popcorn-muncher, but it was set apart from the pack by a number of factors that ensured its quality and integrity. An A-list Twentieth Century Fox production, the film boasted an estimated budget of $18,000,000 (think of that figure in 1980's dollars), so this was no Cannon or Golan-Globus effort, and the money spent is quite evident in its slick visual style. Its cast was letter-perfect for portraying kickass soldiers/he-men, and their multicultural camaraderie harkens back to the kind of male bonding found in classic war films, leading the audience to care as the previously undefeated warriors meet their grisly fates. Schwarzenegger's

Photo credit: 20th Century Fox/Photofest

Dutch is great as the film's action hero figurehead and wields a physique suggesting Conan the Barbarian transplanted from the Hyborian age into the meat-grinder of twentieth-century warfare. But what makes Dutch unique among Schwarzenegger's more or less similar protagonists is that Dutch actually displays an element unseen in any other Schwarzenegger performance: simple human fear. Even a man as formidable as Dutch would be either a fool or insane not to display some trepidation at contending with a being like the Predator, an emotional response that everyone in the viewing audience shared, so while quite capable of taking the fight to his enemy, Dutch does so with a clear knowledge that the next second could be his last, and the same goes for his team. Reagan-era heroes were meant to be stony, emotionless and implacable — an aspect appropriate for the cybernetic Terminator, but impossible to relate to in a character identified as fully mortal — so the human fear reaction of Dutch and his men only adds to the narrative's gravitas.

While the aforementioned aspects certainly elevated *Predator* to better-than-average status, it was the sure hand of director John McTiernan that kept things taut and briskly paced. Exciting and engrossing from start to finish, the film is helmed with the same beguiling precision and thrills that McTiernan would go on to provide in his next film, 1988's *Die Hard*, a now-classic film that, perhaps more than any other, crystallized all of the things that made for a great 80's action movie. The director's singular chops were then displayed to great effect in 1990's *The Hunt for Red October*, but it is for *Predator* and *Die Hard* for which he is most deservedly renowned.

Following the success of *Predator*, several of those involved in it continued in movies, and two of its number left showbiz for paths that few would have predicted. Bill Duke and Sonny Landham appeared in 1988's *Action Jackson*, which featured fellow *Predator* alumnus Carl Weathers as its star. Before passing away in 1991, Kevin Peter Hall put his height to good use as the friendly Sasquatch in *Harry and the Hendersons* (1987) and 1990's *Predator 2*, in which Hall was the only returning cast member from the original film. Jesse "The Body" Ventura returned to professional wrestling and changed his *nom de ring* to "The Mind" before embarking upon an unlikely and successful bid for the office of Governor of Minnesota. Arnold Schwarzenegger continued on his trajectory as the world's Number One action star in such hit films as Paul Verhoeven's *Total Recall* (1990), *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991) and *True Lies* (1994), the latter two helmed by James Cameron in the wake of his blockbuster success with *Aliens* (1985). By the time of *True Lies*, the era of a box office almost totally dominated by the likes of Schwarzenegger and Stallone had pretty much run its course, so, like Ventura, Schwarzenegger launched an unlikely and successful political career and wound up as the Governor of California, an office he holds to this day. Now, as the *Predator* franchise experiences a post-millennial reboot under the guidance of Robert Rodriguez, it remains to be seen what unpredictable fruit will sprout from the seeds planted by its new iteration.



A detail shot of the groundbreaking creature design that remains unequaled to this date.

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LANE SMITH
(My Cousin Vinny, Red Dawn)

DIRECTED BY
FRANK DE FELITTA
(Then Entity, Scissors)

WRITTEN BY
J.D. FEIGELSON
(Chiller, The Windsplitter)



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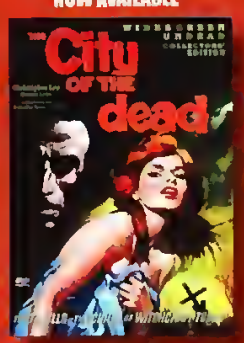
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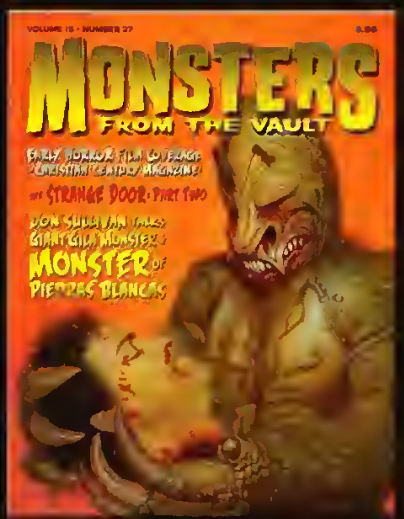
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DINOSAURS, BLUES AND ROCK'N'ROLL

An Interview With William Stout
by Jessie Lilley



All artwork © William Stout. Courtesy the artist

When one determines to interview a talent like William Stout, whose credits span several mediums over several decades, one must have a plan. Luckily, I had one, so when the man said the time had come, I was ready for him. In the grand tradition of FM, I decided that this interview would concentrate on Mr. Stout's film credentials and based on his early work with Dan O'Bannon, I began by asking Bill to first fill me in on O'Bannon's role in modern filmmaking. He was generous with his knowledge and eloquent in his praise.

"Sure. Dan is one of those unsung heroes of film. He and George Lucas did something that was unbelievably important, and to explain that, I just have to talk a little bit about the history of Production Design.

"In the old days of film there were no Production Designers; they were called Art Directors and the first Art Directors came from an illustration background. My heroes are two of those guys, William Cameron Menzies and Anton Grot. Grot designed most of the Errol Flynn swashbucklers. Menzies was the first person to achieve the title of Production Designer. He designed the entire production of *Gone With the Wind* and directed a third of the film. He storyboarded every shot in full color – and the crew slavishly copied his storyboards for compositions throughout the entire film. But Victor Fleming did not want to share the director's credit, so David Selznick approached Menzies and explained the problem. Selznick proposed that he would like to give Menzies a new title. His credit would read 'Production Designed by William Cameron Menzies.' *Gone With the Wind* was the first film where that term was used.

"Nowadays, there are Production Designers and Art Directors. The basic difference between the two is the Production Designer is the eyes of the Director. He is responsible for everything you see on the screen except for the performances of the actors. So, the Production Designer is in charge of all the sets, all the make-ups, all the props, the set dressing, special effects, make-up effects; everything that you see is under the domain of the Production Designer. The Art Director works for the Production Designer and for the most part is heavily involved in the hands-on budgeting and scheduling of everything that goes on in the Art Department. Sometimes, especially on low-budget films, one person will do both jobs.

"In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the background of Production Designers changed. They started coming from an architectural background and they had to work their way up, for decades, through the hierarchy of the Set Designers and fellow trained architects to achieve the title of Art Director, and then they had to work even harder and get lucky to become a Production Designer. That changed with two films.

One of the first movie posters Stout ever painted, for the animated feature WIZARDS, is still one of his most popular images. He creates a new version every ten years.



Stout's monster spoof of Norman Rockwell's famous "Triple Self Portrait" was the cover to Stout's MONSTERS SKETCHBOOK Volume 2.

"The first film that it changed with was *Star Wars*. Instead of hiring a traditional Production Designer, George Lucas hired Ralph McQuarrie to set the visual tone of the film. In essence, although he did not get that credit, Ralph McQuarrie was the Production Designer of *Star Wars*. Dan O'Bannon was hired on *Star Wars* to design the computer effects that were in the film. O'Bannon, after *Star Wars*, got hired by Alejandro Jodorowsky for *Dune*. Together they put together an unbelievable Art Department that consisted of H.R. Giger, Ron Cobb, Jean Giraud (who is also known as Moebius) and Chris Foss. These guys were the designers of Jodorowsky's *Dune*. Well, the financing for Jodorowsky's *Dune* ultimately fell apart. At the same time, Dan's script for *Alien* got picked up by Ridley Scott. Ridley called Dan, who had been working with Jodorowsky in Spain, and flew him over to London. Dan told Ridley that he had this phenomenal Art Department that they'd put together for *Dune*. It would be a tragedy to let these guys go. Why not hire them to design *Alien?* Ridley looked at their work and thought it was a great idea, so those guys became the designers for *Alien*. And that was the crack in the door that allowed guys like me to get into Production Design without having to go through decades of architectural training. And I – after working with Ron Cobb on *Conan the Barbarian* – became Production Designer for *Return of the Living Dead*. And actually, I was Production Designer prior to that, for an unmade Godzilla film that I worked on for a couple of years."

An unmade Godzilla film; I'd heard about this before but didn't know any of the details, so I asked Bill if he'd fill me in. Happily, he was delighted to do so.

"Well, it was my storyboards that originally set me up to be a Production Designer. I had been hired to do the presentation art and storyboards for the Godzilla movie, and Steve Miner wanted really large panels with lots of detail in them. I showed what I was doing to Mentor Huebner, and Mentor said that in actuality I was production designing the film. The set dressing was all there, the props were all there; I really was designing this film. He told me I should ask the Producer to let me be the Production Designer. And so I summoned up the nerve. The next time I saw Steve, I asked him about it. He said he'd think about it and then he called Ron Cobb, to see whether Ron thought I was up to production designing the picture. Ron said that with a strong Art Director he thought I'd do a great job. And so Steve called me back and announced I was the Production Designer.

"Now, this Godzilla movie is the best project I ever worked on that never got made. It had a script written by Fred Dekker that was just phenomenal. The Producer/Director was going to be Steve Miner. I was the Production Designer. After I began boarding the effects I put together my storyboard team: Dave Stevens and Doug Wildey. Between the three of us, we storyboarded the entire film. Then we hired Rick Baker to sculpt the large, robotic Godzilla head; Dave Allen was going to do the stop motion animation of Godzilla, and Stephen Czerkas (later in his career an important paleoartist with his own dinosaur museum in Utah) sculpted the Godzilla stop motion animated figure prototype based upon my designs.

"What I loved about that project was this: so often, people will announce that they're gonna remake a classic, and automatically, you have legions of enemies. (*laughs*) People who love that film hate you for even talking about remaking it! But I thought remaking Godzilla was a great idea because, here was a project with a wonderful concept, but the execution – well, it's pretty crude. It's obviously a guy in a suit walking around miniatures. Steve's idea was to have the audience come in expecting to see a regular Godzilla film and then hit them with a big Spielbergian extravaganza – just blow 'em out of their shoes. And that was our goal; that was our plan.

"Fred's script was just fantastic. It was told from the point of view of a 13-year-old boy. Godzilla begins by attacking Golden Gate Bridge and devastates big chunks of San Francisco; at the end he dies on Alcatraz. The boy has to sacrifice Godzilla, even though they have bonded and have this relationship, in order to save his own father's life. It's a great, great story. We were on that for two years. Unfortunately, it was the right project at the wrong time. It was going to be very expensive because there were special effects shots in almost every scene and at that point in time, four very expensive films completely bombed, the most famous of which was *Heaven's Gate*.

"Steve would work his way up the chain of command in a studio and finally get to the top guy. Everyone was saying, 'Yes, maybe' – and then the top guy would say, 'No.' And it was mostly because of the failure of those four expensive films.

"Right after *Godzilla*, I got hired by Dan O'Bannon. Now, I had been an acquaintance of Dan's because Dan was a really close friend of Ron Cobb, and at Ron's parties I would see Dan. To those parties I would bring my current work, just to get feedback from people. I was working on my dinosaur book back then and Dan, of all the people at the party, was the most enthusiastic about it. What I didn't know was that he was considering me as Production Designer, but he wasn't sure whether or not I could handle the high-tech aspects of the design work. When I brought in a cover I had done for the *Alien Worlds* comic book, which had an astronaut sinking into the ground surrounded by nasty little creatures, Dan looked at the high-tech elements on the space suit and said, "Ah HA! Stout can do tech!" Dan told his Line Producer, Graham Henderson, that he had a short list of who he wanted



"We drew large panels for the GODZILLA storyboards, larger than any I've done for my other films. Some of the detail I drew in these panels suggested I should actually be the film's production designer."

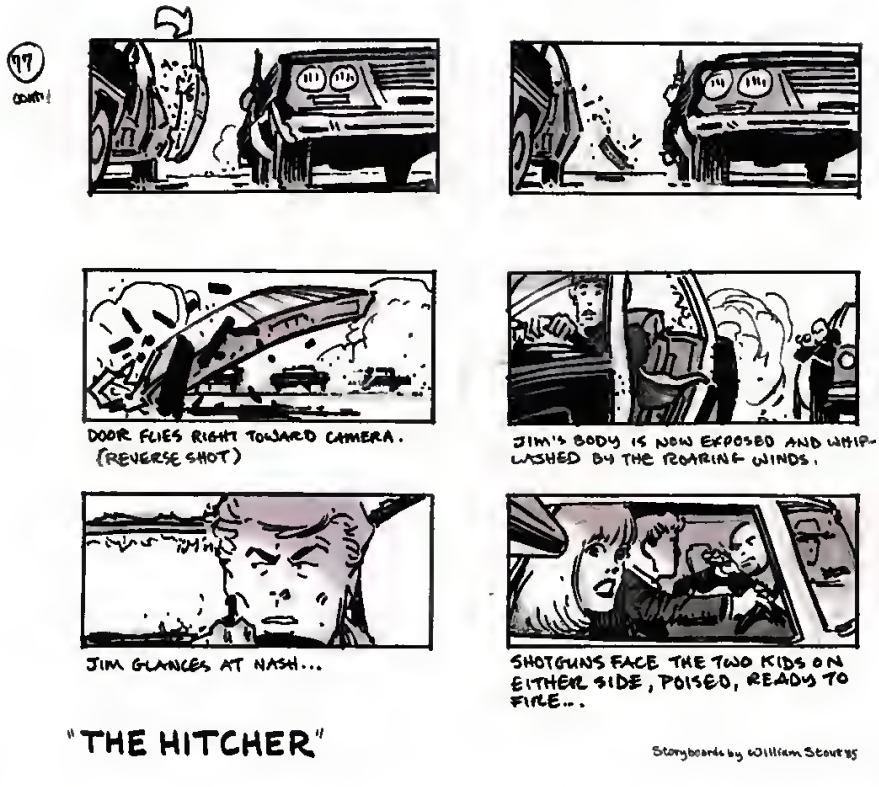
to be Production Designer for this film. First – Bernie Wrightson; second – William Stout (*laughs*). Like I said, short list.

"Graham did his homework, and he saw that at that time Bernie didn't have any film credits (Bernie's first film was *Ghostbusters*), but that I had already worked on several motion pictures. So, he lied to Dan. Graham said he called Bernie and Bernie turned hirn down. But actually he only called me. We cut a deal very quickly and I became the Production Designer for the film."

Holy cow! I wondered if Bernie knew about this.

"Oh, yeah! He knows. I asked Bernie about it and Bernie said, 'He never called me!' That's how I know! *(laughs)*"

Along with everyone else, although I never knew Dan O'Bannon, I was stunned to hear of his passing this past December. I asked Bill if he'd like to say anything to the man's memory.



Stout and director Robert Harmon shared the same vision in the making of Harmon's film THE HITCHER. Stout also designed the exterior of the police station for the film.

"Yes! Dan's passing was such a huge creative loss to every fan of the genres we all love. Man, we were gonna do all kinds of projects together, including some comic books. One of the many things Dan wrote was a comic book story that Moebius illustrated called *The Long Tomorrow.* That became the design template for *Blade Runner.* Look at Ridley Scott's drawings – once Ridley had worked with Moebius, Ridley began to draw like Moebius. He really admired Jean's work. *The Long Tomorrow* will blow you away. Dan had also just completed his book *The Necronomicon.* I can't wait to read it – and, hopefully, illustrate it. Dan was very, very special."

As he'd detailed the work that is expected of a Production Designer, I then asked Bill if he'd elaborate on storyboarding. The actual putting together of a film has always fascinated me. I assume one begins with the story and always wondered when the actual storyboards came into the picture. Along with that question, I also wanted to ask about something I'd read years ago regarding Alfred Hitchcock. Was it true that he did his own storyboards?

"Mentor Huebner did Hitchcock's storyboards. Mentor's one of the great storyboard artists of all time. He and Sherm Labby were the storyboard artists for *Blade Runner.* Did Hitchcock storyboard all his films? Yes, but what that means is that Hitchcock hired a storyboard artist and he had his films planned out visually in advance before he ever turned on the camera. So, he didn't physically draw the boards himself, although he could have. He began as an artist in films, painting sets and title cards for the silents. Now, I would imagine that for some scenes he probably did some very crude thumbnails, which he would hand to his storyboard artist to complete more visually – you know, just so that they were more legible.

"When I've done storyboards on films, every film's been different.

"When I was hired on *First Blood,* they just wanted me to storyboard the action scenes very simply. I was hired by the Line Producer, Buzz Feitshans. The director, Ted Kotcheff, was really hesitant to work with me. He had never used storyboards before and I think he was afraid of my usurping his power as director. Once I set him at ease – once I said, 'Look, this is just for you; this is your picture. This is being done so that we can visually plan all of your shots out. Anything you don't like, I'll be happy to change' – he started to realize what an important tool storyboarding could be for him; to work things out visually, before it gets real expensive and you've got an entire crew waiting to find out what you're going to shoot.

"Feitshans was a very smart Line Producer; he would take the storyboards and reproduce them on the back of the call sheets for each day's shooting so that everyone knew what that day's shots were. It saved so much time; it was powerful visual shorthand and it was brilliant. Buzz told me he always storyboards his films: 'The director's



getting three hours of sleep per night. There are going to be some mornings where he shows up and he is dry – burned out. So, what do we do on a day like that? We let the director rest and shoot the boards.' So, they're very, very cost effective.

"Now, some directors would do little stick figure drawings as a guide to what they wanted. Some would just allow me to interpret the scenes. When I worked on *The Hitcher,* the Director was out on location scout. I asked the Production Designer, which scenes should I do? He said, start page one, scene one, and just go. Keep boarding until the Director gets back. So I began doing that and started filling the walls up with storyboards. Then a funny thing happened. When people would walk into the room they'd look at the boards and then shake their heads and express amazement. I couldn't understand why they were so surprised or startled by my boards.

"After a couple of weeks, the production arranged a screening for me of Robert Harmon's first film as a Director, a short called *China Lake.* I drove over to Technicolor, where they had a screening just for me. The film rolled and it was eerie. I thought, oh, my God – this is a film I directed without realizing I had directed it! His storytelling style was exactly the same as mine; his sense of composition and how he framed things in the camera, exactly the same. And that's what people were responding to! They had seen *China Lake* and they were looking at boards that looked as if the Director himself had boarded the film. Shortly after that, Robert came back from the location scout, walked in the room, glanced quickly around the room and said, 'Yep, that's exactly how I'm gonna shoot it.' *(laughs)* And he did!

"On some films they just want the effects boarded. I can't see how you can make a film with special effects without having storyboards because, if you have twenty people read the script you'll get twenty different visual interpretations of what it's going to look like and how that is going to be done. Once it's storyboarded, everyone's on the same page. 'Oh, that's what it's gonna look like; that's how it's gonna be shot.' You can't get a realistic effects budget without storyboards for that very reason."

Since Bill had established, in wonderful detail, the expectations regarding production design and storyboarding, I felt it was time to get to the meat of the horror genre for the discerning FM reader. It was time to discuss *The Return of the Living Dead;* in this writer's opinion, the most enjoyable of the continuing saga. I know everybody loves the mall, and I do as well, but *Return* is such a wonderful departure. With this in mind, I asked what it was like to walk into something that is an established franchise and make it your own.

"KING KONG is the first film I ever saw. It's still my favorite movie of all time."



After getting approval from Dan O'Bannon for Stout's initial Tar Man design, Stout created this second, more elaborate painting of the Tar Man from THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD.

"Well, we didn't feel like we were walking into a franchise, because Dan's script had already dramatically departed from everything that Romero had done. Dan was determined to do his own highly individual take on the genre. So, the zombies aren't slow, they're fast. Dan came up with them eating brains and the whole film was infused with humor as well as horror. That created a completely different tone from the Romero films. Dan didn't want the traditional zombies that Romero had, either, which is one of the reasons he hired me."

I wondered how the high-speed zombies came about. Did Dan say, "I want faster zombies," and Stout took it from there, or what?

"That was Dan, definitely. He said he didn't want these slow zombies that anyone could outrun. He wanted fast corpses. He wanted people to ask themselves, 'My God! If I was in this situation, how in the heck would I get out of there?' And he had indicated in the script that the zombie known as the Tar Man was a very distinctive zombie. That's when Dan began to talk to me about 'principal corpses.'"



Stout created a range of interesting zombies for THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD. "If only they had been used!" laments Stout.

We both laughed over the term and Stout elaborated.

"Just as there are principal actors in a film, on *Return* we bad principal corpses – zombies with a look distinctively different from any other zombies that you've seen on screen. One of them was the Tar Man. Another was the half corpse: a woman zombie who gets cut in half and then is strapped to a gurney and begins to talk to the other characters in the film. She tells them what it's like to be dead and brought back to life, and how painful it is, which is why they eat the brains. I assumed the brain's endorphins were acting as pain killers. Then there was the Yellow Man, who was hanging in the freezer and ends up headless. And then, of course, there's the split dog *(laughs)* – which is one of my favorites.

"Dan said, 'Just go for it.' I thought, well, I'm not just gonna do people with dark rings around their eyes. I wanted to do really cool zombies. I pulled upon a number of sources. One was EC Comics. I thought it would be fun to have EC-style zombies. So Jack Davis and Graham Ingels influenced them. I was also familiar with the mummies of Guanajuato down in Mexico, the beautifully preserved corpses that are on display down there. I pulled from some of that as well, to try and make the zombies look more realistic – more like they were dead things that were brought back to life. The first thing I did was my homework. What do corpses look like in various stages of decay and preservation?"

I was now contemplating creating a world of the dead, and a question came to mind. With the entertainment and art background that William Stout has, to sit down and design a world peopled by dead things wouldn't strike him – or anyone in the business – as being odd. But out there in the world of the straight people who come to the conventions looking for autographs, there must be someone who had gone to Bill and said, "But you look so normal!" Bill laughed, but was philosophical about it.

"You know, I think if I had been doing this maybe 10 years earlier that would have happened. But by the 80s, there started to be lots of articles, and even magazines – like *Cinefex* – about the making of films. And I think in some ways, that's a huge mistake. It's like revealing how the magician does his tricks. I knew things were getting grim in this business when my grandfather could quote me the box office grosses from the weekend. I thought that was horrible; why on earth would anyone not in the film biz even want to know that? It has nothing to do with the enjoyment of a film or whether or not you liked the story. Ugh. So, by the time I was doing conventions, there was a lot of information out there about how films were being made and stuff. It had begun to de-mystify things."

We agreed that it's a double-edged sword. Once one has the details, the bloom is definitely off the rose and the magic is gone. Yet, I countered, with something like the original *Famous Monsters of Filmland,* which presented detailed discussion on (for instance) how Jack Pierce did Karloff's make-up in *Frankenstein,* we wound up with a generation of make-up artists working today who cut their teeth on that article.

Stout agrees and disagrees.

"Yeah, FM influenced all the classic Monster Kids, but see – back then, when we were reading your magazine, when Rick Baker and I were reading about that stuff – we were just a handful of kids who were really into monsters. The general public wasn't into all of that stuff. They didn't read *Famous Monsters* and dream of going into the movie business. Today, the market is saturated; it really has broken through the fourth wall."

So, we agreed to disagree on that subject and, having dissected the ins and outs of the highlights of his film career, I asked Bill to tell me about his exhibition at Laguna College of Art and Design.

"I was invited by them to present a gallery exhibition at the college and to give a lecture to their students. I thought about it awhile and felt that drawing examples from all the different artistic genres and putting them in one show might provide a pretty effective show – a good teaching tool for the student body. So first I asked how many pictures they needed for this show. They said about 50 and I thought, 'Man! I don't know if I've got 50 really dynamite pieces! I've sold so much...' I wanted stuff that I would consider worthy of this kind of responsibility. I was worried, so after putting down the phone I thought I'd just make a quick list off the top of my head of what I knew I had – I came up with 200 pieces! *(laughs)* So, I thought, okay; this isn't going to be a problem. I just have to whittle the 200 down to 50. This is great! This really will be the *crème de la crème.*

"That made me really excited, and it turns out that the fellow that hung the show is a huge fan of mine. He hung it with enormous thought and taste. In fact, he was one of the ones who had been really pushing for the college to get me. It turned out to be the most successful exhibition that they ever had. It had the highest attendance of any show in the college's history. I was told the lecture that I did at the college was the only one they ever had where they had to tell people to go home. *(laughs)* That was really nice. The main reaction they got, when people walked through the show, was 'Wait a minute! One guy did this?' I work in a diversity of styles and that was sort of shocking for people; to see one guy doing cartoony stuff as well as absolutely traditional, academic realism and everything in between."



This mastodon painting is the quarter scale version of the first of twelve murals depicting the prehistoric life of San Diego for the San Diego Natural History Museum.

That's a lecture I'd have liked to attend. I had also heard rumors of an extensive autobiography that Bill was working on. I couldn't help but wonder where he'd start, as it took me a week to find a starting point just for this interview!

"I've had a lot of demand for a big book of my stuff. I soon came to realize that I've got way too much stuff for one book. It would be the heaviest book in the world. So I thought, 'Wait a minute – why don't I do a series of books, each on a different aspect of my career? We'll have a volume just on my murals, one just on my motion picture advertising, film design, comics and stuff.' The first volume is titled *William Stout Prehistoric Life Murals.* I started writing captions for the pictures. The captions turned into anecdotes and the anecdotes turned into stories and I realized, what I've got here, really, in the text for this book, is chunks of an autobiography about this particular period in my life. That was what gave me the idea to do these retrospective volumes on different aspects of my career, winding up with a multi-volume autobiography. It makes for a really readable series of books because I can employ all of my best anecdotes and stories."

I couldn't resist going back to film for a moment and asking about my favorite character from 20th century fiction: John Carter.

"Oh! I've worked on three different John Carter films. But I'm not working on the current one, sad to say. If Pixar gave me the call, I'd do it.

"My goal of designing John Carter for film would be taking it way beyond what the past illustrators, like J. Allen St. John and Frank Frazetta, have done. The reason being that book illustration has a different audience than films do. Film audiences, whether they're intelligent or not, have become very visually sophisticated. They can take in an enormous amount of information in a very short time. If you present them with only what has been done in the books, that is not going to be enough. They're gonna visually digest that in seconds and then be hungry for more. If that's all you've given them, they're gonna be disappointed. So what you have to do is dig and dig and dig and layer and layer and layer. That was what was exciting to me.

"I started to think about the Tharks; you know, the big, four-armed green men. Okay. What are they, really? They're a nomadic people. What do nomadic people have in common? They carry their wealth with them, and more often than not, they wear it. So that thinking begins to make the Tharks a more realistic culture. You look for ways to start to make it richer and deeper. Tharks have tusks, for example. They probably decorate these dusks with scrimshaw-like decorations. Now that's something that Frazetta and St. John didn't do in their illustrations, and Burroughs didn't mention them not doing it. It starts to add a depth of design and originality and something interesting to look at on the screen."

And so, disappointed though I am that it doesn't look as if the new Pixar film will have the talents of William Stout's production design work, I had to ask: what next?

"Right now, I'm at the beginning of a project with Sam Simon, one of the co-creators of *The Simpsons.* It's a live action comedy and I've been dying to do a comedy. There are two things I really would love to production design: a comedy and a western. I'm a big western fan. I'm working with Sam on this project and that's all I can say about it except to note that it will appeal to fans of *Famous Monsters* and fans of comedy – if you like movies that are really, really funny. *(laughs)*"

I made the mistake of assuming that Bill's autobiography would be the only book project he had in the works right now; silly me.

"I have finished the first volume of a three-volume book set. The first volume is called *50 Legends of the Blues.* The second will be called *50 Legends of British Blues* and the third will be called *50 Modern Legends of the Blues.* Jimmy Page has agreed to write the introduction to the first volume. Each volume consists of fifty full-color portraits of my favorite blues musicians. I've written bios on each of them with



"This was the first drawing I did for my book 50 LEGENDS OF THE BLUES. I still think it's one of my best."



This portrait of the dork faerie king Oberon (from Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM) graces the cover of Stout's first collection of his fantasy work, HALLUCINATIONS.



The queen of the faeries, Titonio (also from A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM) and her domain serve as the cover to the second book collection of Stout's fantasy work, INSPIRATIONS.

recommended listening – it's just a total passion of mine. It's my desert island music."

Where the heck does the man find the time for all of this? He must be going 24/7!

"This project started when I was convalescing from surgery. I'm the kind of guy who just can't sit still and not do anything, so I started drawing portraits of all my favorite blues guys. I made a list of all the guys that Robert Crumb didn't draw in the *Heroes of the Blues* trading cards. Happily, he didn't draw the guys that I'm more passionate about. He didn't do the Chicago guys, he didn't do Robert Johnson, Willie Dixon – all the Chess guys."

So who is going to publish this set of William Stout books, one can't help but wonder.

"*(Laughs)* Well, there was a tug o' war between Rizzoli and Abrams, as to who's going to publish the book. It's looking now like Abrams will be doing it. Billy Gibbons from ZZ Top has agreed to write the intro to the second volume, *50 Legends of British Blues. 50 Modern Legends of the Blues* will have guys like Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan and Paul Butterfield and Mike Bloomfield – I'm gonna try and get Eric Clapton to write the intro to that one. Eric's a good writer and he knows the subject. I think he'd be perfect."

Another passion that Stout and I share – the venerable blues – that and books. There can never be enough books by William Stout, and Stout apparently feels the same way. A multi-volume autobiography and a three-volume set on blues legends aren't enough to keep our lad busy, it seems.

"In July I have the first collection of my fantasy work coming out. It's called *Hallucinations;* in September I have a companion volume to that coming out called *Inspirations,* which is all female related fantasy pictures; angels and mermaids and fairies and things like that. Then I finished the text to my most requested book, which collects all my music related art. It'll have all my bootleg record album covers, my legitimate album covers, posters for rock festivals, band flyers and things like that.

"I have a lot of fun stories in it; I have had some great rock 'n' roll adventures. My friend Mark Whaley used to construct stages for outdoor rock'n'roll festivals; he also managed bands. I did lots of stuff for him. He came over one night with this concert promoter and they said they were gonna have this huge five-day rock festival in Louisiana. They said they needed to think of a job for me so that I could be a part of it. So we brainstormed for the next hour or so and finally Mark said he knew what my job was: 'We need a guy to sit on stage while the bands are playing and draw the musicians.' I said, 'Okay. I'll take that job.' It was incredible! I joined this hippy caravan to Louisiana and was on stage every night with these amazing acts and my job was to just sit there and draw them. Amazing! Because of that job I eventually became friends with Delaney and Bonnie and Boz Scaggs and all these wonderful people in the world of the music I loved so much."

By now, my head was spinning and I said, "I can't think of another thing. Actually I can think of a million other things but..."

"Ycah. *(laughs)*"

And so we ended our conversation, vowing to pick it up again when next we meet, and pledging eternal devotion to dinosaurs, blues and rock'n'roll. Here's to William Stout. Long may he wave!



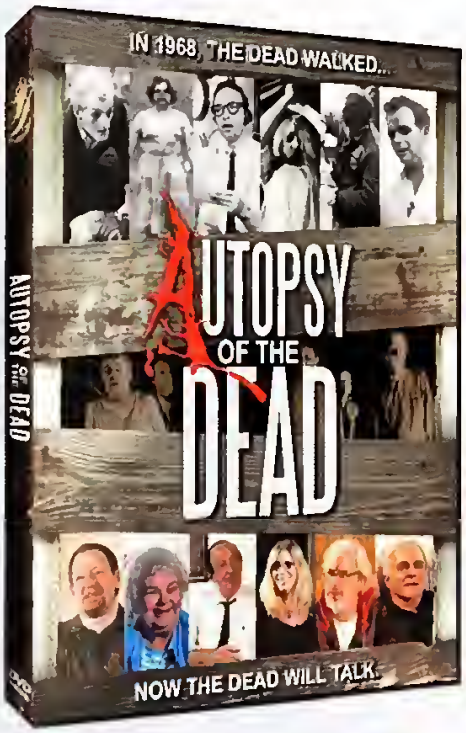
Stout has a 2011 ZOMBIES! Calendar due for release late this summer. This parody of Grant Wood's "American Gothic" will be included as one of the calendar images.





NEW RELEASES BASED ON HORROR CINEMA'S MOST SPINE-CHILLING FAMOUS MONSTERS...

GEORGE A. ROMERO'S LIVING DEAD



AUTOPSY OF THE DEAD

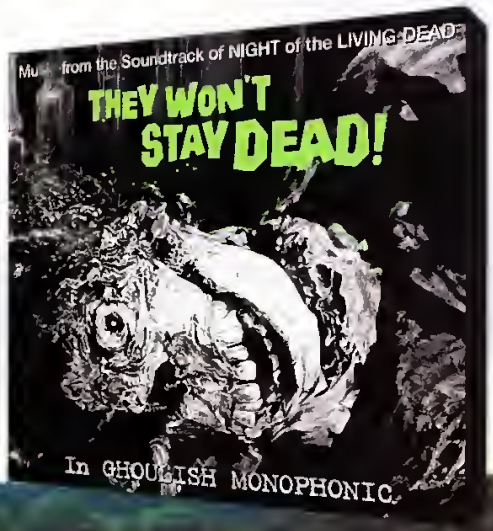
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DARK SKIES AHEAD

by April Snellings



For the past 50 years, horror has been embraced by the independent film world like no other genre. A trend that began in the 1960s with films like Francis Ford Coppola's *Dementia 13* and George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* became a full-fledged phenomenon in the 1970s, when Charles B. Pierce's *The Legend of Boggy Creek* and Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* turned miniscule budgets into huge box office returns. Ushered in by two very different monsters – the Sasquatch-like creature of *Boggy Creek* and *TCM's* Leatherface – the modern age of the indie horror film has produced some of the genre's most enduring and iconic pictures. Cult classics like *Evil Dead* and *Re-Animator*, as well as pop culture milestones like *Halloween* and *The Blair Witch Project* all came, not from the Hollywood studio system, but from the catch-as-catch-can world of indie filmmaking.

Dark Sky Films understands this dynamic, and is using it to carve out an impressive niche for themselves. Though their Chicago home office is a stone's throw from the cornfields of Illinois – 2,000 miles from Los Angeles and nearly 1,000 from the indie hub of New York City – Dark Sky's slate of upcoming releases boasts some of the most exciting names in contemporary horror cinema. Their stable of filmmakers includes Adam Green (*Hatchet, Frozen*), James Felix McKenney (*Automatons, Satan Hates You*), Ti West (*House of the Devil, The Roost*) and Jim Mickle (*Mulberry Street*). Their 2010 schedule consists of entries in some of horror's most fertile sub-genres: slasher flicks, ghost stories, vampire yarns and even an old-fashioned, guy-in-a-monster-suit creature feature.

Though Dark Sky has only existed as an entity for about six years, the company's history stretches back to the golden age of big-box VHS releases. Dark Sky's parent company, MPI, was one of the first and largest home video distributors in the world; besides boasting a catalog of more than 2,000 films, MPI became a genre icon with a subsidiary called Gorgon Video. Through Gorgon, MPI released cult horror titles like *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* and *A Night to Dismember* (though Gorgon is probably best remembered for the notorious *Faces of Death* series, which was a standard endurance test for many a teenager throughout the 1980s).

"In a lot of ways, the company was virtually built on genre films and the Gorgon label, so it's been in our blood for a really long time," says Greg Newman, Dark Sky's executive vice president. "Over the decades, MPI has developed different types of products, but we launched Dark Sky because we were sitting on a great foundation of films on which we could really build a strong brand. We were fortunate to have things like *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* and the original *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, among others, and we felt like that was a pretty good place to start."

As a genre distributor, Dark Sky took an aggressive approach on two fronts: resurrecting forgotten horror titles, such as the 1976 Spanish shocker *Who Can Kill a Child?* and the 1964 camp classic *The Horror of Party Beach*, and building a platform for strong new releases that might otherwise have slipped through the cracks – films like 2008's *Deadgirl* and the 2006 French thriller *Them*. Though Dark Sky is becoming more active as a production company, they intend to keep searching for genre flicks deserving of a proper re-release; several are on the schedule for 2010.

"*Horror Hospital* is one that we're really excited about," says Dark Sky producer Todd Wieneke. "It's been a longtime favorite since we put it out on Gorgon, and now it's come back home. *Bonnie's Kids*, an American exploitation film from the 1970s, is another film we're very much looking forward to releasing this year. We have a number of predominantly 1970s, and also some 1980s, movies that we're looking

(L to R) Benjamin Hugh Abel Forster, Amy Chang, Michael Rooker and Blanche Baker make a gruesome discovery in HYPOTHERMIA.



Rooker as the title character in the disturbing and influential classic HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER (1986).

HENRY Photo credit: Maljack Productions/Photofest. © Maljack Productions. All other images courtesy and © Glass Eye Pix.



"Memo to self: no more spur-of-the-moment camping trips." An unhappy Joshua Leonard in BITTER FEAST.



Yeah, but you should see the *other* guy. From HYPOTHERMIA.

forward to re-releasing, including *Death Spa*, which was an original production of MPI's."

"Dark Sky started as a label based on this great collection of films we had, and we operated the label as a way to rediscover some classics," Newman says. "I feel like we did a hell of a job with some of the restorations and special editions of films like *Magic* and *Who Can Kill a Child?*, and we had a great run of doing just that – trying to rediscover lost classics and doing these collector-level releases. But at some point that became more difficult to do...at the end of the day, there aren't that many films left to be re-discovered. We're still doing that, but we've also transitioned into doing more contemporary films. Production is just a natural progression in that. We've always had a hand in production, going back to *Henry* (we actually made *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* way back when). Through the years we have had a hand in productions, but it's very much a major part of our plan moving forward at Dark Sky. We're looking at doing somewhere between five and seven original productions a year, provided we can find the right projects."

So far, the company has done a bang-up job lining up the "right projects." Thanks in large part to a partnership with indie horror guru Larry Fessenden's Glass Eye Pix *(see page 51)*, Dark Sky's 2010 production schedule includes some of the year's most anticipated horror movies. Besides Green's *Hatchet 2* and West's *The Innkeepers* (scheduled for a 2011 release), Dark Sky is also producing McKenney's *Creature From the Black Lagoon*-inspired *Hypothermia* and Jim Mickle's vampire road movie, *Stake Land*. They're even putting a clever spin on the "torture porn" trope with Joe Maggio's darkly comic *Bitter Feast*.

"We always strive to make or release films that will live beyond their initial release window," Newman says. "That's really what drives everything we do – we want films that people are are going to enjoy and that people are going to want to revisit; films that will live beyond the initial rental, sell-through period, and I think there's a pretty good chance films like *The House of the Devil* will fit that category. That's what we're looking to continue to do, and that's what drives our decision-making for acquisitions and for original productions."

HYPOTHERMIA

"It's like *Jaws* under ice."

That's Newman's take on *Hypothermia*, an old-fashioned monster movie that is part of a multi-picture deal between Dark Sky and Glass Eye Pix. Written and directed by McKenney, *Hypothermia* stars Michael Rooker (*Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*) as a blue-collar family man who plans to spend his hard-earned vacation on an ice-fishing expedition with his wife and children. Things take a bloody turn for the worse when the vacationers spot something big – too big to be a



Wondering what's got Rooker all worked up? Well, you can either wait until later this year when HYPOTHERMIA opens... or you can *turn the page...*

fish – swimming beneath the ice, and decide to catch it. Like any monster worth its salt, the creature has no intention of being caught, and responds by dispatching its adversaries with extreme prejudice.

Hypothermia is the result of McKenney's longtime love affair with Universal's *The Creature From the Black Lagoon*. "I just love that movie so much," the director says. "It is the perfect 1950s science fiction/horror/monster movie. The monster itself is such an iconic design and then when it's underwater – so cool. I remember seeing *The Revenge of the Creature* in 3D on TV when I was a kid in Maine. You could get free 3D glasses at one of the local gas station chains, and one of our local TV stations showed the movie (along with *Gorilla at Large*) over and over again all summer. I couldn't get enough of it."

McKenney, a monster kid to the core, spent years searching for a film that replicated the experience of *Creature* – to no avail. "Nobody's ever come close to making an aquatic monster like the Creature. I've seen them all, from *Monster of Piedras Blancas* to *Zaat* to *Island of the Fishmen*, and they are all either just imitations or something that comes across as stiff and awkward or just silly. I think it's really hard to do an amphibious man-monster well. [Director] Jack Arnold really pulled off something amazing with those first two Creature films. The only other successful attempt would probably be Abe Sapien from the *Hellboy* movies, who is just a supporting character and, of course, a good guy, not a monster."

So *The Creature From the Black Lagoon* became the standard to which McKenney and his crew would aspire. If they can realize a monster that's "even one-tenth as cool and effective" as *Creature*'s Gill Man, McKenney will be satisfied that he and his team have created something special. To that end, he opted for classic practical effects over the increasingly ubiquitous digital effects that have become the industry standard.

"Our 'Lake Man' started out as a series of crude sketches that I did," McKenney recalls. "I think the problem with a lot of the lesser aquatic monsters that we've seen is that they are often too bulky and don't move very fast or gracefully.

FM EXCLUSIVE!



I wanted something that is sleek and black like an eel, but with the face of a piranha." McKenney sent his sketches to comic book and storyboard artist (and frequent Glass Eye Pix collaborator) Brahm Revel, and later to comic book artist Ian Sta. Maria, both of whom did renderings of the monster that McKenney calls "very impressive."

"I forwarded those along with some photos of some aquatic life that I liked certain features of (a fin here, a row of teeth there) to Chris Bridges at Gaslight FX Studio in Toronto. We had several back-and-forth discussions on the designs, making little tweaks and adjustments. For our performer, we chose Asa Leibmann who played a number of the Infected in *I Am Legend*, among other things. Asa had his body cast by Chris, who then went to work on building us the creature. A couple of months later, there was our Lake Man – on set and ready to terrorize our actors!"

Hypothermia is set for an October 2010 release.

HATCHET 2

When Green's love letter to old-school slasher flicks became a breakout success in 2006, a sequel seemed like a done deal. Horror fans loved the campy tone and over-the-top practical gore effects that were *Hatchet*'s trademarks, and the film was a huge hit for Anchor Bay. A string of production companies wanted in on the second installment of a potential hit franchise, and fans were itching for a return to Victor Crowley's neck of the swamp. And then...nothing happened.

"We wanted to make sure that we all came at it with the same passion that we had for the first one," says Green of the *Hatchet*-free years from 2007 through 2009. "The first one was, for a lot of us, our first movie; it was kind of put together with Scotch tape and good will. By the time it actually came out, we were all pretty sick of it and just over it, so as soon as the first one became a success, everybody was like, 'Where's the sequel?' It was very important to me that I got to go and make some other, different kinds of movies so I could be just

FM is very proud to bring you – for the first time *anywhere* – these exclusive shots of the monsters from Dark Sky's upcoming fright flicks, HYPOTHERMIA and STAKE LAND! You're not gonna see these anywhere else (at least not until next week when every other horror site scans 'em and posts 'em on the internet)!



as excited to come back to this."

During the interim between *Hatchet* and its upcoming sequel, Green and his company, Ariescope, were busy with a number of projects – most notably *Frozen* and *Grace*. Offers were coming in from any number of companies who wanted a piece of Victor Crowley, but it wasn't until Dark Sky came into the picture that Green felt he'd found the partners he was looking for.

"They were one of many companies that called us, but they were real people," Green says. "This is going to sound weird, but even the fact that their main office isn't located in Hollywood, we like that. We became friends with them very fast, and that's always been sort of the motto around here, is to work with your friends because life's just too short.

"They're very much forward thinking, which I like. They're thinking of the bigger picture all the time. And also, Greg is a fan – if you look at his DVD shelf, it has all things that you would have on yours or that I would have on mine. You can talk to Greg about any horror movie, and he gets it."

Green promises to exceed any expectations fans might have for his much-anticipated sequel. "I don't want to give anything away as to exactly what happens, but as a frame of reference, in the first *Hatchet* we used 55 gallons of fake blood, and in this one we used 136. There were seven onscreen deaths in the first film, and there are 17 onscreen deaths in this one. If people liked the first one, there's no way they're not going to like this one better."

Though *Hatchet 2,* set for a mid-September 2010 release, will offer plenty of gory spectacle, Green also sees it as a far more emotionally complex story than the first installment. In fact, it's part of a story that's been floating around the young filmmaker's head for some 25 years. The idea for *Hatchet*'s Victor Crowley came from a story Green heard at summer camp when he was eight years old. In order to scare the younger children away from their party cabin, the camp counselors warned kids that "Hatchet Face" would get them if they strayed too far from their own cabins. Green thought Hatchet Face sounded pretty fantastic, and wanted to know more. When the counselors couldn't provide a back story, Green made one up for himself. His grisly tale caused tears and some low-grade hysterics in Green's fellow campers, and resulted in a call to his parents and threats to boot him out of summer camp. Realizing he'd stumbled onto some powerful stuff, Green spent the next two and a half decades developing the story that would eventually become *Hatchet.*

Though Green has had plenty of opportunities to work in the studio system, for the time being he'd rather work with



Connor Paolo and Nick Damici search the night for things that go bump in it in STAKE LAND.

smaller companies, like Dark Sky. "They've been absolutely fantastic," he says. "When you work with the major studios, you're often answering, not to the studios themselves, but to big corporations like Nabisco and Coca-Cola, and they just care about numbers. Dark Sky was just excited to collaborate and work with us. Dark Sky has been nothing but fair and encouraging and excited on a level that's been contagious for us."

STAKE LAND

Another Dark Sky Films/Glass Eye Pix collaboration is Mickle's sprawling vampire epic, *Stake Land*. Set in an America that has been ravaged by both vampires and religious fanatics (it's a toss-up as to which is more dangerous), Mickle's ambitious new feature boasts a heady mix of traditional horror and social allegory.

"It's essentially a story about a boy – at the beginning of the movie the boy is kind of coming of age during a vampire apocalypse, so it's got less traditional vampire elements and more of a kind of a *Grapes of Wrath* feel, or even *Days of Heaven* – kind of a Depression-era story with some scares and action all merged into one big pot. It's an oddly undescribable movie in some ways," Mickle laughs. "But luckily, I think all the layers and all the levels work quite well together."

Stake Land was originally conceived by Mickle and co-writer Nick Damici as a series of webisodes. When Dark Sky struck a three-picture deal with Glass Eye Pix, Mickle and Damici got a chance to develop their story as a feature project.

Filmed in Reading, Pennsylvania, and the Catskill Mountains, *Stake Land* features practical creature effects by Brian Spears (who also worked on *Bitter Feast* and *Hypothermia*). Mickle promises vamps that are far removed from the sparkling teens of *Twilight* – the creatures that inhabit *Stake Land* are ugly, feral things. "They're sloppy and messy," he says. "The film also doesn't fit into the kind of clean, pretty Hollywood action kind of stuff. We tried to keep it a much more brutal, visceral experience, as if you're there watching this stuff happen."

Mickle is currently in post-production, and hoping for a fall 2010 release. "The other day, someone told me this feels like a vampire movie that was made by Terrence Malick. Once I heard that, I was like, great! That's the highest compliment you can give me for this movie."

With Ti West's ghost story *The Innkeepers* just starting principal photography and several unannounced projects in development, Dark Sky shows no signs of slowing down. In a time marked by high-profile disputes between filmmakers and the studios who finance their work, Dark Sky is fostering a reputation as the kind of company visionary directors want to work with – even if it means sacrificing the higher budgets offered by major studios. Though their projects, and the filmmakers who are realizing them, are incredibly diverse, they're all united by Dark Sky's hands-off approach.

"I don't think it makes sense the other way," Newman says. "Once you've read a script, you've met a director, you're interested in a project and you hit that point where you're investing in it – why would you have taken it to that point if you plan to step in and basically undo the project? The filmmakers are the ones who have the vision; by the time you sign off and green light a project, it just makes no sense to interfere. At that point, we've done our homework and we have great faith that the directors are going to realize their visions and deliver us a great product. You've just got to let them go and do what they've got to do, and chances are what comes back is going to be great."

Indie horror icon Larry Fessenden doesn't make promises lightly, but there are a few things he can guarantee anyone who signs on to make a movie for him: you'll work long hours, you won't make much money, and your budget will be less than the catering tab on most studio films. So why are some of the hottest genre directors in the business turning down Hollywood gigs in favor of working for Fessenden's New York-based Glass Eye Pix?

"I work for them, actually," Fessenden laughs. "We all just enjoy working on each other's projects. It makes us feel like we're a community, and I think that matters when you're a filmmaker. A lot of us have jobs outside of Glass Eye Pix, but we come together and keep working together. That's the secret: it's just loyalty. Some days it's your movie, and some days you're just supporting someone else so they can make theirs."

Glass Eye was originally formed in the mid 80's, as a vehicle for getting Fessenden's own films produced. While making smart, socially conscious horror movies like *No Telling* and *The Last Winter*, Fessenden discovered another talent: a knack for fostering and mentoring talented young filmmakers. Glass Eye became more than a production company; it's been described as a sort of utopian commune for up-and-coming filmmakers.

"I think we all want the same thing," Fessenden says. "To make strong, individual, artistic films. We all love horror, and there's an aesthetic of not wasting anything. It's not about the ego or about how many toys you have – it's about resourcefulness."

Three of the most anticipated films on Dark Sky's 2010 production schedule are the result of a collaboration with Glass Eye that began with last year's *The House of the Devil*. Glass Eye had hired Ti West to write a script several years ago, after West made *The Roost*. When the filmmakers were looking for the money to make *THofD*, they came across MPI/Dark Sky. West's low-fi chiller became a hit with critics and horror fans alike, and MPI's Derek Curl suggested that the two companies do a slate of films together. They quickly moved forward on three projects: *Bitter Feast, Stake Land* and *Hypothermia*.

For Fessenden and his Glass Eye colleagues, the timing couldn't have been better. "A lot of movie companies are trying to make movies cheaper and cheaper, and we know how to do that. But it's a very, very scary time, and we're very lucky to have MPI during this last year of desperation for the country. Because we had made a deal with MPI/Dark Sky, we can make these films and know that, one way or another, they're going to get distributed."



Scary just sitting there: Tom Noonan as creepy Mr. Ulman in last year's THE HOUSE OF THE DEVIL.

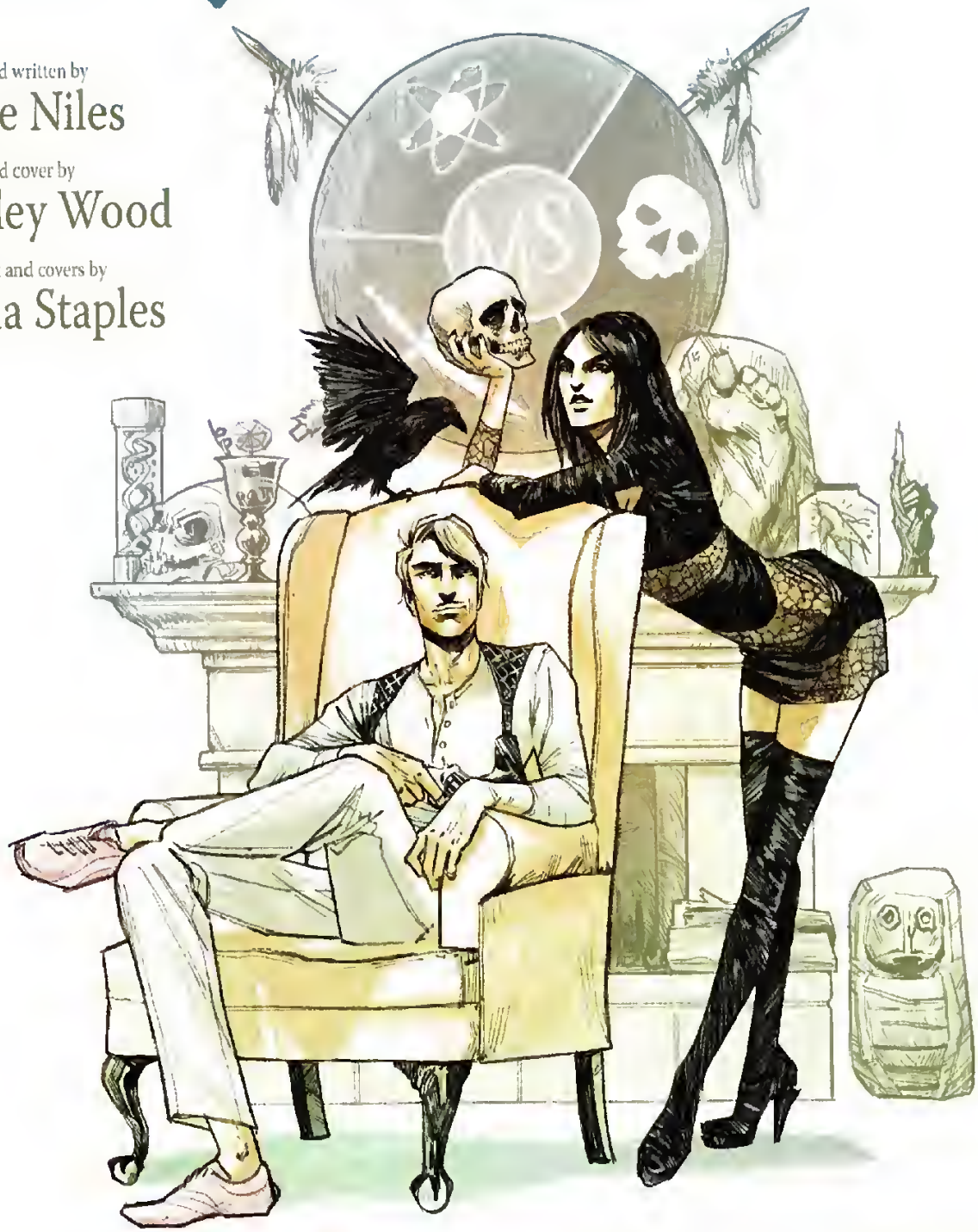
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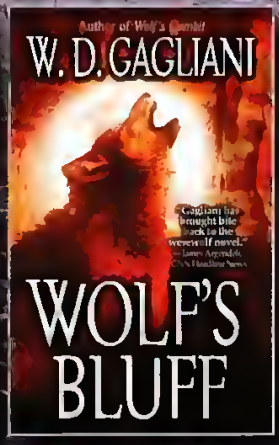
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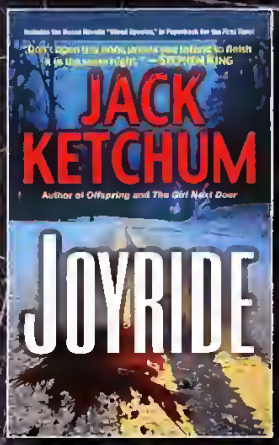
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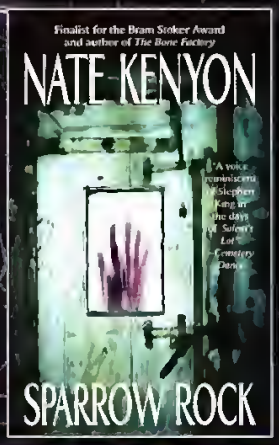
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Ray Bradbury

Interview by Steve Weintz

"I'm the cousin to Jules Verne, I'm related to H.G. Wells and I think I know something about a film like 'The Invisible Man.'"

Ray Bradbury will celebrate his ninetieth orbit around the Sun this August, yet the 21st century finds "the Mayor of Greenwood and the Emperor of Mars" still hard at work at his craft and his passions. Mr. Bradbury never fails to pay forward the six years he spent educating himself in the Los Angeles Public Library, and frequently speaks at library events throughout Southern California. His appearances at book signings and conventions are packed with fans who revel in his causes, concerns and word magic. It was especially wonderful to sit down with Mr. Bradbury and engage him as a storyteller and a fan, for Ray was present at the creation of the sci-fi / fantasy / horror universe we know and love today.

FM: Please tell us about your new musical *Wisdom 2116.*

RB: The whole thing developed because Charles Laughton came to me fifty-five years ago and asked me to write a stage play of *Fahrenheit 451.* So I wrote my first play version of that story and gave it to Charlie; he took me to dinner one night with his producer, and they sat there and they told me, "Your play doesn't work, we don't think it will stage." I left there and walked down the street on La Cienega looking for a cab, with tears streaming down my cheeks. I wanted so very much to write a play for Charles Laughton, because I loved him and I'd seen him on the stage, I'd seen him on the screen.



It was a couple of years later that he came to the house with Elsa, and he stood over my six-year-old daughter, and he looked down at her and said, "Aren't I fat?" And she said, "What, sir?" He said, "Answer me! Aren't I fat?!" She said, "I think so." He turned to me then and said, "Now, I want you to come up with some ideas, and I want you to write a one-act play for me and Elsa; a science-fiction idea of some sort, which could be a musical. We would like to do a half-hour musical of some sort, if you come up with an idea." So I said, "Let me think about it. Let me come to your house tomorrow afternoon, and I'll bring some ideas with me and we'll discuss what I'm going to do for you."

So I went to their house the next afternoon and I told them the idea for what we called *Our Wisdom* (it was originally called *Happy Anniversary 2116*) about a couple on their fiftieth wedding anniversary who go to a marionette company. She buys a robot of herself, that is, a duplicate of herself when she was twenty-one, and he buys a robot of himself when he was twenty-one. They bring them out and it doesn't work; because the robots are not quite the same as what they were. So, at the end of my play I put the robots together and leave the husband and wife on their fiftieth wedding anniversary, forgetting about the robots.

That's the idea I told Mr. Laughton; he said, "That's a great idea! Will you write it for us?" I said, "Yes I will. It may take a week or two." He said, "Look, come every evening around four o'clock. We'll talk about the idea; you write it, and we'll give you martinis every afternoon at four." So for the next two weeks I wrote various pages of what you see on the stage and brought it to them, and Charles and Elsa read it out loud. (I have a recording of his voice here somewhere, reading some of the script.) Then they gave me martinis. In about two weeks I had it finished and they were very happy.

They brought James Whale in, who was the director of *Frankenstein,* and he loved the idea; he built miniature sets and gave them to us. They were little miniature sets about twenty-eight inches tall. I wish I had those sets; when Elsa died she left them somewhere but I don't know where they are today. But anyway, everybody died too soon. James Whale drowned in his pool, and a couple years later Charles Laughton died of cancer; terrible, very sad. When they were gone there was no way of

Photo credit: Ralph Nelson. ©Ralph Nelson

putting on the play.

All these years have gone by, and now this group, Gallimaufry Performing Arts, came along a few months ago, and began to create what you see on the stage. When I see what they've done I'm amazed. I cry every night when I see it because the singing is so great, and the dancing and the choreography are terrific. So they've added to what I've done; it's a real collaboration, and I'm terribly happy.

FM: One of the hats you've worn has been that of a playwright for over fifty years –

RB: That's right, yes.

FM: This is the first musical that you have created?

RB: No, I did a musical of *Fahrenheit 451,* that spent two summers at the O'Neill Music Center back in Connecticut, and it has a very good score. And I wrote a musical of *Dandelion Wine,* which we premiered at Lincoln Center in 1972, and it's a *beautiful* version of that story. So I've done quite a bit on the musical stage.

FM: I had the opportunity to hear you last year at the Rancho Mirage Public Library –

RB: Oh, yeah, yeah...

FM: – where you recounted the marvelous story of your friendship with the late Gene Kelly, and the origin of what eventually became *Something Wicked This Way Comes.*

RB: That's right, yes.

FM: Did Gene's gift for the art form of the musical inform you at all as you were working on this piece?

RB: Of course! Because I loved him so much; I had just seen *Singing In The Rain* back in 1952, when I met him. I said, "Mr. Kelly, you know, you have produced the greatest musical ever made in the entire history of film. And not only that, it's a science-fiction musical about the invention of sound, and what the invention of sound did to people. You have a great screenplay by Betty Condon and Adolph Greene, and you provided the choreography and made this incredible film." He said he was so happy to hear that from me, and he kept inviting me to the studio to see his various films.

One day in 1955 he invited me to the studio to see a film called *Invitation to the Dance.* I came away, and walked home with my wife, and I said, "Oh God, I'd like to work for that man. I wish I knew what to do." She said, "Why don't you go to your file and look for a story, and if it looks good why don't you adapt it into a screen treatment and give it to him?" So I went to my file and I found a short story called *The Black Ferris* and thought, "That looks good." So I spent a week and wrote a seventy-two-page treatment and gave it to Gene Kelly.

He said, "Oh my God, this is great! I would like this to be my next film! Will you allow me to take this to Paris and to Rome to try and get some money?" I said, "Take it! Take it! I'm so happy you want to take it!" So he went to Paris and Rome and he came back a month later. He said, "I'm sorry, Ray; there's no money. I'm so sorry." I said, "Don't tell me you're sorry! I am honored that you tried to do this." So he gave me the treatment back, and I spent two years changing the treatment into a novel called *Something Wicked This Way Comes.*

So you see how wonderful it is? You see what love can do for your life? My love for him and his love for me – and you've got a novel now, plus a film.

FM: Please tell us about your friend Forrest J Ackerman.

RB: Well, he took me out of high school and educated me. (*chuckles*) I was seventeen years old, and he put up with my shenanigans, because I was a smart-ass kid that made a lot of noise and did imitations and behaved badly, I'm sure. But I was part of the science-fiction group, and he invited me out to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, where he worked with the lady in charge of the Academy. He did all this work for her, mimeographing and what have you, and along the way he got me the "hectograph" of his magazine, *Imagination.* In those days they didn't use a mimeograph, they used a hectograph. So I helped him with his first issue of that magazine, and as it progressed I wrote articles for it and did covers for the magazine (which were terrible; I was not an artist). But he put up with me.

When I had an idea to have my own magazine *Futuria Fantasia,* he provided me with the money and mimeographed the magazine for me, and he paid to mail it. He licked all the stamps and mailed it out for me. That took a lot of money, at least a hundred dollars, to make that magazine, but he provided the money.

Then the first science-fiction convention in the history of the world began in New York in July of 1939. I couldn't go because I had no money. I was selling newspapers on a street corner, and I was only making ten dollars a week. So I saved what money I could, but Forry gave me the money, around eighty dollars, to buy a Greyhound bus ticket and get me to New York, to see the World Science Fiction Convention. I got there and I lived in a YMCA. There was a dinner one night for Frank R. Paul, who was a leading artist. I couldn't go to the dinner but I wanted to hear him speak. So Forry made it possible for me to come in and sit and listen to him. I couldn't have dinner, but I could hear the lecture, and Forry made it possible.

I had with me a portfolio of paintings and drawings and artwork by Hannes Bok. He hadn't been hired yet by any magazine people. I showed his work to all the editors of all the magazines at the science-fiction convention, but nobody wanted anything to do with Hannes Bok. So Forry Ackerman said, "Why don't we take you up to *Weird Tales*? I'll introduce you to Farnsworth Wright, and maybe he will like Hannes

Bok's work." So Forry took me up to Farnsworth Wright's offices and I showed him Hannes Bok's work, and Farnsworth Wright said, "Yes, I'll use him on a cover of *Weird Tales."* So I got the job for Hannes Bok, because of Forry Ackerman.

Then Forry took me to the Natural History Museum to show me the dinosaur bones. You see how thoughtful he was? He knew I wanted to see the dinosaur bones. Then he took me to Lewisohn Stadium at night to hear an all-evening concert of music by Tchaikovsky. I remember that evening so well. Then he took me to the World's Fair which opened that year out at Flushing Meadows, and I was there July 4th evening, with Forry Ackerman looking at the fireworks, and enjoying the World's Fair so much, so beautiful; but I wept because I looked in the sky – the future of mankind was World War II. It was only a few weeks away, and I knew that war might kill me, too. But I was there with Forry, across from the Russian Stadium, looking at the stadium and thinking that it would either be Hitler or Stalin that destroys us all. Then, on the next day after the World's Fair, Forry took me to a theater to see *Things to Come* and *The Man Who Could Work Miracles,* by H.G. Wells. So he was a further influence on me, with good films.

So there you've got your background; always he was busy influencing my imagination and making sure I met famous people. Every time I went to his house he would have someone there that worked in films. One day I met Hurd Hatfield at his house, who was the lead in *The Portrait of Dorian Gray.* He had Paul Henreid from *Casablanca* over at the house too, and he had Shirley Temple's first husband over there, and Vincent Price. All these people were in and out, even while he helped set up the first Fantasy Awards. Time and again, time and again, he was saying, "Come over, I want you to meet someone."

So you see, it was constant, pricking my imagination and keeping me alive. I'll give you another example of the way he behaved. He knew my friend William Nolan, and William Nolan was one of my students. I finally sold my first story on my twenty-first birthday, August 22nd, 1941, and I encouraged William Nolan to write his stories. I went to a film with Bill over at a theater on La Cienega one night, some time in the 1940's, and during the intermission (I was with my wife), I heard a voice from the back of the audience cry, "Ruxtra! Ruxtra! William Nolan Publishes His First Story!" Forry came plunging through the audience waving a magazine – it was a copy of the first story by Bill Nolan in a magazine, and Forry handed him the magazine.

Thus you see how he behaved; he knew exactly how to dramatize life.

FM: There was a "third musketeer"; your friend Ray Harryhausen, who is sharing a milestone this year with you.

RB: That's right, yes.

FM: On the Ray Bradbury online forum, someone posted a marvelous photo from Halloween 1938, in which I think you're on the left in a mask and either Forry or Ray is on the right, but you're wearing rubber masks that Ray Harryhausen made for you all.

RB: That's right, yeah, yeah. (*smiles*)

FM: Do you remember that evening? It looks like a very warm evening, judging from the palm trees and the light in the sky over your shoulder.

RB: Yeah, we went down to the Paramount Theater to see *The Cat and the Canary* with Bob Hope, and I wore that mask. Ray Harryhausen sat next to me with Forry Ackerman, and I leaned forward and scared the girl in the row ahead. So I remember that evening very well.

FM: When did you meet Ray Harryhausen?

RB: At Forry's house. I went over to see him one day, and Ray was there, getting some pictures from *King Kong. King Kong* was a big love in my life. Forry introduced my to this young man and said, "He builds monsters in his garage." So Ray said, "You want to come over to my house and see my dinosaurs?" I went over to his house and saw the dinosaurs in his garage that he was beginning to animate. So I knew I had met the love of my life, and it followed all these years we've been friends, hoping to do a film together, and finally we made *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms;* all because Forry introduced us.

Forry introduced me to Fritz Lang, too; and Fritz Lang liked my work and wanted very much to do something of mine. So I invited him over to my house on Halloween in 1950, and I had Ray Harryhausen there, and Ray put on his marionette show for Fritz. Marionettes, not animation! With strings, you see, so before he did his animations he worked with marionettes! He did that for Fritz Lang, and Fritz Lang was delighted to meet young Ray.

FM: Can you tell us more about that very talented writer, Leigh Brackett?

RB: Well, I met her down at the Science Fiction League at Clifton's Cafeteria and got to know her. I was then in my twenties and I lived in Venice; I moved there when I was twenty-one years old. She lived on the Venice Beach, and she said, "Every Sunday afternoon I'll be playing volleyball at the Muscle Beach, so if you want to come meet me there and bring one of your stories, I'll read your story and you can read one of mine." So every Sunday for six years I met her, hundreds of times, at Muscle Beach; she read my lousy stories, and I read her brilliant ones. Finally, she sold her work to Howard Hawks and she made the screenplay of *The Big Sleep* with William Faulkner. She invited me to the studio, and I met Howard Hawks, Humphrey Bogart and William Faulkner in one day – can you believe that? – all because of Leigh, and all because of Ackerman introducing me to Leigh at Clifton's Cafeteria!

FM: You made that key connection with

Farnsworth Wright so that Hannes Bok could join Virgil Finlay and Margaret Brundage and other great artists at *Weird Tales*. Did you stay in touch with Bok in later years?

RB: Well, we wrote back and forth. I saw him on one occasion when I was in New York, but he was a very shy person. I said, "You've got to get around to the art galleries and find someone to promote you. You're not selling enough of your stuff! You should believe in yourself the way I do – I think you are incredible." I have a number of his pieces; I have one hanging in the dining room that he gave me as my ten-percent reward for selling him to *Weird Tales*.

FM: Has that piece ever been reproduced?

RB: It's in the front of *Futuria Fantasia* – the book. He gave me two pictures; one that's on the outside of the book and one that's on the inside. The original of the first is down in the dining room.

FM: Did you meet Marion C. Cooper and Ernest Schoedsack?

RB: Oh, God. Listen. In 1970 sometime, in the summer, a friend of mine said, "Would you like to meet Marion Cooper and Lowell Thomas?" They invented Cinerama! I said. "Oh, my God, yes! Those two men are geniuses! I love *King Kong* and I love Lowell Thomas for inventing Cinerama!" Because Cinerama made me cry, you see; I wanted to go to London, and Paris, and Egypt, and Rome and I had no money, and I just cried when I looked at Cinerama. So my friend invited me to lunch one day with Lowell Thomas and Marion Cooper. Isn't it wonderful?

The next day Marion Cooper went back to San Diego and took a full-page ad in the newspaper, saying, "Congratulate me! Today I met Ray Bradbury!" I read the ad and said, "No, no! I wanted to meet him! He didn't want to meet me!" But he took out that ad. I wish I had a copy; I wish I could find a copy of that. What an honor it was to have him take out that ad; can you believe that?



FM: Well, you have that effect on people!

RB: (*laughs*) And they on me! He made some great films. Marion Cooper was behind John Ford's *The Quiet Man* with John Wayne. It's one of the great films; I've seen the film a dozen times. It's all about Ireland, where I lived for a year when I worked on *Moby Dick*. Marion Cooper backed that. He backed a lot of John Ford's films.

FM: You are one of the great architects of what might be called the "Old Mars" of Lowell and Burroughs and others.

RB: Yes, sure.

FM: Hannes Bok was able to evoke that Mars so wonderfully in some of his landscapes. You've mentioned that Egypt and orientalism were influences; were the Southwest or the Andes also inspirations? What other elements did you use in your Martian stories that were part of the common pool of ideas?

RB: When I was three years old they brought Tut out of the tomb. I saw a copy of the *National Geographic*, which did not often have color photographs in it because color photography was still being invented. But there's a single picture, I believe in *National Geographic*, of the mask of King Tut. And that so influenced me; I went to my mother and I said, "What do you know about this man?" She said, "He lived five thousand years ago." And I said, "Oh my God, that's a long time!" I was so impressed.

So King Tut stayed as my influence, and as years went by he came into my life more and more, again and again. When I wrote *The Martian Chronicles*, my interest in Egypt and King Tut was in there; and later, when I put on my play based on that book at the El Rey Theater on Wilshire Boulevard, there was the King Tut exhibit three blocks away at the LA County Art Museum. One night I went over and looked at the King Tut exhibit and I said, "My God! Those are my Martians!" Then I went back to my theater and I looked up in the stage, and looked at my Martians with their golden masks, and I said, "Oh my God! That's King Tut!" So I had Tut and Martians, Martians and Tut! They're connected – isn't that beautiful?

So these things happen in life – the way your love for one thing influences your art in another.

FM: Ray, thank you very much.

RB: Sure; I'm glad that does it. (*chuckles*) I'm glad you got the batteries!



Turn the page for an FM Exclusive – a never before published short story by Ray Bradbury!

Photo courtesy and © Ray Bradbury

NIBLICK IS THE NAME

A story by
RAY BRADBURY

"Niblick is the name," said my brother.

"What do you mean, Niblick?" I said.

"On the other hand, it's the nineteenth hole."

"The nineteenth hole?" I said.

My brother dug with a spade in the backyard. "It's going to be right here. Niblick would be a bad name, so maybe nineteenth hole would be better. Do you know what I'm doing here?" He dug some more dirt with his spade.

I moved closer and said, "Are you building something?"

"Yes. A miniature golf course. Since we can't afford to go to the golf course. You don't have a job; you're fourteen, I don't have a job; I'm eighteen, and dad's been out of work for two years. So, if we can't afford to go to a miniature golf course I'm going to build one."

"You mean here, in the backyard? There's not much room."

"Well, there won't be eighteen holes but I'll build nine holes. Go and get those two-by-fours out in the alley and bring 'em in. They should sustain the walls of the miniature golf course."

I went out to the alley and brought back the two-by fours.

My brother was still busy digging. "Maybe we'll call this the nineteenth hole."

"You're not going to build an eighteen hole miniature golf course?"

"No, there's no room. But we'll build nine holes plus an extra one and call it the nineteenth hole. That's where all golfers go when they're done with the course in the afternoon to have their drinks. When I finish this in a few days we'll have drinks to celebrate, okay?"

"Okay," I said and went to get more lumber.

We were digging all afternoon when dad came down and stood, watching us.

I noticed something wet coming off the end of his nose.

"What's that?" said Skip. "Has it been raining?"

"I don't think so," said dad. He reached up and wiped the tear from the end of his nose.

"My God, what's going on here?"

"You know darned well," said Skip. "This is a Father's Day gift for you. When we're all done you'll be the first to play."

"Jesus, God," said dad. "A real miniature golf course in the backyard! I hope nobody finds out."

"How come?" said Skip.

"They'll all be over here, playing. My God, it's all the rage these days, isn't it. There are miniature golf courses all across the country. They've even written books about it. As soon as we get money again we'll go play the real ones."

"This will be real," said Skip. "Help me, dad. Put that two-by-four over there and that other one over here."

Dad plunged into work.

Late in the afternoon we had a path laid out, about twenty feet long. Skip put a tin cup in the hole at the end and said, "There, there we have it. Now, hole number one or hole number nineteen, depending on how you look at it, is done. Dad, you have your putter handy?"

Dad snorted and reached behind a nearby bench and brought out his bag of golf clubs.

"Which one do we want? I thought I heard you use the word niblick."

"You can't play a niblick on a putting course, can you dad?"

"Not exactly," he said. "But . . ."

He drew out of the golf bag a long silver shaft, with the end made of wood.

I said, "Is this a niblick?"

"That's about it," said dad.

"This is the club you use to drive off a tee to make a distance of a hundred or two hundred yards?"

"That's it," said dad.

I turned the niblick around in my hands. "My God, that's a beaut; it's fine wood."

"The best," said dad.

"Dad," said my brother, "put your golf ball on the tee."

"To putt you don't need a tee, but what the hell, we'll do it anyway."

My brother bent down and put a tee at the end of the path and put the ball down on it.

Dad was prepared to take his stance when suddenly someone appeared in the backyard.

We all looked around.

"My God!" said the man. "What's going on here?"

"It's the niblick course," said my brother.

"The niblick what?" said the man, Mr. Berling, our landlord, the man we paid rent to every day and every week and every month.

"Did you build this?" he said.

My brother nodded. "You're damn rights I did. We're going to have a game in about two hours, when we finish at least one path.

"No you're not," said Berling. "I want this all cleared out. I want to bring in grass seed and make a nice lawn. I don't want any damned miniature golf course back here. When I come back I want this all torn up."

"No way," said my brother. "We've got to have at least one game, otherwise I wouldn't have built it. And dad's going to be first here, because it's his, for Father's Day."

Dad nodded, solemnly, his eyes looking wet.

Berling stepped forward. "Look, it's very simple: you ruined the backyard and I don't want anything like this. I want it all out, completely empty, when I come tomorrow morning."

"As I said, we've got to have at least one game. Dad's going to be first and shorty is next and then I'll follow. We can't afford to go to the regular golf course."

"I don't give a damn about that," said Berling. "This is my yard and my space. Listen to me, what kind of rent are you paying?"

"Not much."

"Damned right," said Berling.

"You've got to prick up your ears and listen to me. You going to move, start pulling it all out?"

"Not right now," said my brother.

"You're being difficult," said Mr. Berling.

"I wouldn't say so," said Skip. "You've got to relax. Come back in the morning and maybe it won't be here."

"No maybes," said Berling. "It's got to be definite." He began to back off. "You listening?"

"We hear nice and clear."

"I'm going off to wait in the car. I'll give you three minutes and then I want to hear you pulling up all this junk. I want to see you putting the dirt back on this path and I want to see you putting your niblick back in the golf bag. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly clear," said my brother.

Berling backed off further.

I lifted the niblilck in my hands and waved at him, not as if it was a weapon, but as a kind of way to let him know we were going to play no matter what.

He looked at the niblick and backed off further and moved away, out to his car. He got in, sat, and looked back at us.

I waved the niblick again and turned and said to my brother, "Let's start. Is dad first?"

"Damn rights," said dad. He picked up the putter and addressed the ball and looked at my brother and me and said, "Do I follow through?"

"Go ahead," said my brother.

My dad putted and the ball went twenty feet down the path and dropped in the hole.

"My God!" cried my brother. "A hole-in-one! You did it, dad!"

"Yes, sir."

We all walked down to the hole and my dad leaned down to pick up the ball.

From the end of his nose a single drop fell.

"Is it raining again?" said my brother.

"No, I guess that's a tear," said my father quietly, eyes shut. "I think that's it."

"Is this the first hole, the eighteenth, or the nineteenth?"

"The nineteenth, where we all get drinks," said my brother.

He bent down and behind a bench by the last hole he took out three bottles: one Nehi rootbeer for me, a bottle of Nehi cola for himself and a bottle of Nehi orange, which he handed to my father.

"Here's your beer dad, for the nineteenth hole."

"Doesn't look like beer," said Dad.

"Let's say that it is," said Skip.

My dad, his eyes shut, drank some of the Nehi orange and with eyes still shut, nodded.

"That's beer all right. Good beer. So are we all going to play a complete game now?"

"Yes, sir," I said.

I handed the niblick to by brother. "I don't want this. Let me use the putter."

"Here's the putter, shorty," he said.

I went back and put the ball down on the ground and addressed it. I said, "God, I hope this is a hole-in-one."

"It already is," said my brother.

"You betcha," said my father.

"To heck with naming it niblick. Let's call it the putting green-miniature golf course, which belongs to us, just us."

"That's it," said my father.

"That's it," said my brother.

And I putted the hole.

THE END

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TRUE STORIES

a multi-fanged look at HBO's Vampire phenomenon, TRUE BLOOD



TRUE BLOOD ® & ©2010 Home Box Office, Inc. Photo credit: HBO/John P. Johnson

'True' Magicians

Creating the blood-soaked makeup effects for TRUE BLOOD is all in a day's work for the team at MastersFX

by Joe Nazzaro

Vampires are big business nowadays, between the angst-ridden adventures of the *Twilight* crew dominating the box office and *The Vampire Diaries* scaring up the small screen. But as true aficionados of the undead will attest, the edgiest vampire fare can currently be found on HBO's *True Blood*. Based on the best-selling novels by Charlaine Harris, the series focuses on psychically sensitive Bon Temps waitress Sookie Stackhouse (Anna Paquin) and her centuries-old paramour Bill Compton (Stephen Moyer). It's a world in which vampires have become, if not socially accepted, at least a major presence in society.

The task of creating *True Blood*'s ambitious makeup effects went to MastersFX, under company president Todd Masters and prosthetic FX supervisor Daniel Rebert, who supervises the show's day-to-day demands. While their initial work was primarily involved with the various vampire characters and their blood-drenched handiwork, subsequent seasons have introduced other members of the supernatural community.

"This season has definitely been our biggest so far," declares Rebert, who's wrapping up the final episodes of season three. "I don't know how much I'm allowed to say, but there are a lot of on-screen deaths this season, human, vampire and werewolf. By the time this is printed, everybody is going to know there are werewolves this season, which are real wolves, but there's also a digital model used. The only thing we've done for the wolves is parts, but I don't really want to say more than that."

"Typically, season three determines the overall quality of a show," reflects Masters, "and *True Blood* really seems to be getting better with each script. The cast and crew is a really solid unit; we shoot long hours, we prep quickly and the demands are high; we don't get surprised by much anymore. It's a strange thing to look around at all the body parts, blood and gore, thinking it's business as usual."

"There *has* been a lot of on-screen gore," interjects Rebert. "Without giving away too much, we've done duplicates of cast members, mainly for staking, beheadings and things like that. We're shooting episode nine right now and we've probably built more for season three than seasons one and two combined. We have at least one big gag every week, plus all the new vampires get new fangs. We've seen a lot of vampires get staked this season, so there are plenty of gloopy vampire remains to be seen as well."

Vampire and Civil War veteran Bill Compton (Stephen Moyer) plays with his food (Lenny Schmidt) in the second season episode "Hard-Hearted Hannah."

Photo credit: MastersFX



OUCH! A particularly effective example of MastersFX's prosthetics work.

MastersFX first became involved with *True Blood* thanks to an invitation from series creator Alan Ball with whom they had worked on the HBO series *Six Feet Under*, and the film *Towelhead*. "Before a lot of the production crew was even hired," says Rebert, "Alan phoned Todd and I saying he really wanted to see something original in vampire teeth. One of the things I came up with was having them unfold from the back palette like a rattlesnake's teeth, so we created a little mechanical model with a false front, where you actually saw the eyeteeth roll back underneath the flesh of the gum as the fang hinged out. We only used it as reference for visual effects, but that was one big idea that came from our initial meeting."

One of the earliest challenges for the MastersFX team was to create a unique look for the world of *True Blood* that was pretty much unlike anything that had already been seen in other vampire-based dramas. "One of the first things that Alan said to us," Rebert relates, "was, 'I don't want *Buffy*!' His vision of the *True Blood* story and the vision of this show

in general is to base what we're doing on what's happening in the real, natural world. We try and keep everything grounded in reality and away from that perma-brow that they had on *Buffy*. And again, Alan wanted to keep it more grounded in reality and less Halloween spooky."

"That's a good example of how Dan and I work together on design," continues Masters. "He's very grounded in nature and appreciates the laws of nature's touch, while I'm, well, a bit more rock-n-roll with my designing. I like to push it, often beyond what's real in nature, and the mix of our principles often comes out for the better. Dan also has a large memory bank for classic sci-fi and horror movies, way more than I do. He's great for drumming up ideas and things to avoid when designing, and what's been done before in a particular genre."

"On that note," says Rebert, "we actually have two different bite mark prosthetics. There are the fang-banger prosthetics, which are much larger and more infected-looking, like the track marks of a heroin addict, and we have what we call the 'cute bites,' the smaller, more classic-looking wounds, which are reserved for when Bill bites Sookie. They're not as striking or ugly as the ones we do for sloppy fang-bangers."

While there is a definite limit as to how graphic an onscreen effect can be, it can often be difficult to determine that limit until a scene is actually being shot. "That happens all the time," says Rebert. "We put a lot of detail into things so they'll ask for something and when they see it, they'll say, 'Wow, that's too much!' It doesn't happen on *True Blood* all that often, because we do a video test for any working blood effect to make sure they see what they're getting. We've had several occasions doing effects, especially for TV shows where when they see it, they say, 'Wow, that's way too much!'"

"Fortunately our blood comes pressurized and with control," adds Masters, "so if they want less, we can dial it down. It always makes me smile when you hear comments like, 'That's gross', or 'Why must it be disgusting…?' when we only do what's written in the script. They write it and we just make it believable."



The Brahma bull puppet head created for the second season finale.

The biggest MastersFX build to date on *True Blood* may well have been the season two finale, "Beyond Here Lies Nothin'," a six-week job that was done in about half the time. "Sam had to take the form of a Brahma bull," Rebert outlines, "so we had to make a bull puppet head that was controlled by one puppeteer while another puppeteer controlled the ears, and visual effects composited the real bull body onto our puppet head. It impales Maryann with its horns, and her beating heart is pulled out of the chest and squished in Sam's hand, so it was a pretty extensive episode.

"We had the bull puppet head, a beating heart and a squishable heart. There were two different insert torsos for the bull horn to go through and we had an actor wearing a harness like the Steve Martin arrow-through-the-head gag with the horn and the character pinned on the bull.

"We also did a cool effect on Sam, when he's tied up to a sacrificial totem. We basically did a slant board effect with a silicone chest where an actor could actually plunge a knife into Sam's abdomen in real time, so it was a complete silicone chest pumped with blood. When the chest was punctured, it was under pressure so the blood squirted out as he was twisting around. We also had the Maenad hands, which were like hawk claws, so that was a pretty extensive episode. Just to get the bull head done in time, we had to do some creative thinking to cut out some of the crucial steps normally needed to create a puppet like that, but what we ended up with looked amazing."

Looking back at his team's work on

Photo credit: MastersFX





The full body prosthetic of the unfortunate Miss Jeanette, and the results of the Maenad's attack.

season two, Rebert finds it difficult to single out just a few specific highlights. "It's really tough to say," he elaborates, "because we put a lot of effort into *all* of it. I was really happy with the way the Miss Jeanette body came out, which was the body they found in episode one with the heart removed. We used that body several times; it was used once in the back of Andy's car with its heart ripped out, again in a coroner scene when we saw the scratches on her back and finally in the final episode for the heart being removed from her chest.

"One thing I was really happy with was an insert puppet back we did for Sookie's back when she gets scratched by the Maenad. We had it rigged with little pustules that the doctor could actually pop so it looked disgusting. It was also rigged when liquid that was supposed to be the antiseptic was poured on it so that it would foam and bleed, so it was a pretty convincing piece."

"Plus it was Sookie," adds Masters. "Working with Anna Paquin is fun; she really gets into it and isn't bashful about blood or any of the stuff we put her through. The entire cast is a real dream, and we are thankful for that. Good actors and good people make for good blood."

With production on season three well underway, the makeup effects department has developed a comfortable working relationship with the so-called straight makeup team. "It's all just one big team as far as I'm concerned," notes Rebert. "We build all the prosthetics that they apply, so they'll do the bite marks and smaller prosthetics, but that stuff is all designed and constructed here at MastersFX."

That same comfortable collaboration has also evolved between MastersFX and Zoic Studios which provides *True Blood*'s visual effects. As Rebert explains, "This season we've done a lot more with visual/practical combination effects, such as what we're now doing with dummy heads. Visual Effects will project an eye blink or even an entire face onto our dummy head, so it will appear to be alive and acting while all sorts of horrible acts are happening to the body."

In terms of what other surprises will await viewers at the end of season three and beyond, even the team at MastersFX isn't quite sure what's going to happen. "It's difficult to say," claims Rebert, "because I don't have scripts 11 and 12 yet. I know that some of the key characters are going to get killed off by the end of the season, but in terms of where they're going to go for season four, I haven't read a script yet."

Whatever direction the series does go in the future, Rebert believes it's going to be exciting – and unpredictable. "I think the audience just has to spend some time with those characters to know how deep the story goes," he claims. "That was what really excited me about the show: the fact that it wasn't just

Photo credits: MastersFX

a vampire story. It's really about all of these supernatural creatures living among us, that are right under our noses, at a time when they're all starting to 'out' themselves. If you're familiar with the books, there's a lot more than just vampires. It's about werewolves, shape-shifters, fairies; a whole mess of supernatural creatures that are going to show themselves eventually."

Maybe so, but Todd Masters believes it's the vampires of *True Blood* that help provide the series with its unique flavor. "I briefly worked on *The Lost Boys* waaaay back when, as well as the *Buffy* movie," he recalls, "so these characters aren't new; it just seems with a new good hook, they can make for handy subject matter. Vampires are back in style. They're mysterious, sexy and evil, all at the same time. Provocative taboos are always fun to watch, right?

"We've done so many vampire shows lately too: *Twilight, New Moon* and *Eclipse, The Vampire Diaries, True Blood, King of Vampires*; it's quite amazing. They're all unique, but *True Blood* is definitely the coolest in my book." And Masters adds, almost as afterthought, "True vampires don't sparkle!"



One of the more colorful means of removing makeup appliances. Which, uh, they don't really employ at MastersFX. Probably.

Dark Times in Bon Temps

An Interview with Charlaine Harris

by Jeff Mariotte

Louisiana nights can get pretty steamy under ordinary circumstances. Throw in telepathic waitress Sookie Stackhouse, played on TV by Anna Paquin, and Stephen Moyer's broody vampire Bill Compton, stir in the creative freedom of HBO, and "steamy" can turn downright explosive.

The hit HBO series *True Blood*, already renewed for a fourth season although season three only kicks off this summer, is based on a series of novels by author Charlaine Harris. The books and the TV series relate the adventures of waitress Sookie, who falls in love with vampire Bill Compton and is drawn into adventures involving a variety of supernatural beings.

Although the Sookie Stackhouse books were popular before Alan Ball (*Six Feet Under*) picked up the rights and got a sometimes extremely adult TV series on the air in 2008, since then sales have skyrocketed. During the summer of 2009, Harris achieved the unprecedented feat of having nine books on the *New York Times* bestseller lists simultaneously – eight Sookie paperbacks and the newest hardcover.

Before writing the first Sookie novel, *Dead Until Dark* (published in 2001) Harris wrote two stand-alone novels, *Sweet and Deadly* (1981) and *A Secret Rage* (1984). She had moderate success with traditional mysteries, including a series about character Aurora Teagarden and a series about Lily Bard. But it wasn't until she added supernatural elements – the vampires, werewolves, and others who populate Sookie's world – that her career began to soar. *Dead Until Dark* won Harris an Anthony Award for Best Paperback Mystery (*True Blood* has scored its share of bling as well, taking home Emmys, Golden Globes, Teen Choice Awards and Scream Awards by the truckload). While writing the Sookie series, Harris created another series, about Harper Connelly, a woman who gains supernatural powers after being struck by lightning.

Although she calls the Sookie novels her "Southern Vampire series," Harris and an author she admires, Laurell K. Hamilton, practically invented the genre called "urban fantasy" that now dominates the bestseller lists. The Sookie novels are packed with action and frights, mellowed by dashes of eroticism and romance, humor and rich language.

The tenth Sookie novel, *Dead in the Family*, was released in May 2010. In between writing more, promoting the book, speaking, answering fan mail and spending time with her family, Charlaine Harris was kind enough to answer some

Photo credit: HBO/Prashant Gupta

questions for *Famous Monsters of Filmland*.

FM: There's a theory that the South produces so many wonderful writers because there's a rich storytelling tradition there. I know back in Tunica, Mississippi, your father was a schoolteacher and principal, in addition to being a planter, and your mother was a stay-at-home mom who became a librarian. Clearly you were around books, and readers. Were they also storytellers? Were there other storytellers in your life? Or is this one of those instances in which the stereotype is all wrong?

Charlaine Harris: They were not storytellers. No folk tales at my grandparents' knees, either. On the other hand, they never tried to repress my own storytelling, which is a huge thing.

FM: Your second husband strongly encouraged your writing. He must have known you were serious about it. When did *you* know you were serious about writing? When did you realize you could make a living at it?

CH: I've always been serious about writing. That was always my secret identity, though I had to work at other jobs to earn money. Define "making a living." I've earned writing money for 26 years, but certainly not enough to live on, until the past, say, eight years.

FM: How does your writing career impact your family life?

CH: Of course, I'm not like the average mom in some ways, but my children adapted to that pretty well. They got used to me being interested in weird stuff and talking about things that may not be big topics of conversation at their friends' homes. I'm typical in the important ways: I love them and I think they're great, and I've always gone to every event of theirs I possibly could. Now that they're more or less out of the home, they perceive me as pretty cool, since all their friends love *True Blood*.

FM: Were you a monster movie fan growing up? Your early books were mostly straight mysteries – when did you develop a taste for the supernatural?

CH: I didn't mind monster movies, but I couldn't bear horror movies. They're still not my favorite viewing, especially the slasher ones. I've always had a taste for the supernatural, as opposed to the simply brutal. I read a lot of Poe growing up, and I always loved ghost stories. Shirley Jackson… what a great writer, and absolutely terrifying when she wanted to be. I started on mysteries because I knew I could write them, and I enjoyed reading them.

FM: What is your average writing day like, if there is such a beast? You're prolific; I count ten Sookie Stackhouse books, eight Aurora Teagardens, five Lily Bards, four Harper Connellys, and two non-series books, plus fistfuls of short fiction, plus books that you have edited or co-edited. How do you fit into your schedule all the non-writing stuff a writer has to do, the correspondence and social media, the blog and website material, answering interview questions and doing other promotional activities?



The creator of the entire Southern Vampire universe, writer Charlaine Harris!

CH: That's a very pertinent question, since some days I work ALL DAY and find at the end I haven't written a word. It's really frustrating. For one thing, I hired an assistant, and that's helped enormously. On the other hand, since I have her, the extra work's sort of multiplied to fill more of her time, too. More people want to get in touch with me now that I've put a contact email address out there. All this busy-ness just multiplies. However, I'm happiest when I can just put words on the page, and I have moments of nostalgia for the simplicity of my working life before Sookie. Just moments, mind you.

FM: When you conceived the character of Harper Connelly, had you ever met a lightning survivor? Will we see more Harper books after *Grave Secret*?

CH: No, I'd never met a lightning survivor, but a listserv of survivors let me "listen in" to their conversations. I never posted, because I didn't want to intrude, but it was fascinating reading their correspondence and coming to a better understanding of their problems and challenges. I don't think I'll write any more Harper books, or at least that's the plan right now.

Photo credit: C. Radish



Maryann the Maenad (Michelle Forbes) has a moment with Sookie (Anna Paquin) in last season's finale.

FM: Which leads into a more complex question. Before you wrote *Dead Until Dark*, did you put a lot of thought into the social structures of the various supernatural groups, and into exactly how their various abilities/traits would manifest? It all seems very well established now, so I wonder if you filled that in on the fly or if you worked it out beforehand.

CH: On the fly, I'm afraid. My rationale is that I never know what I'll need until I need it, as far as world-building goes, and I never like to waste time doing something I don't need to do. There are good things and bad things about this approach, I know.

FM: Are you scared by the ferocity of Sookie+Bill shippers and Sookie+Eric shippers? Were you ever that kind of avid fan of anything?

CH: Yes. Laurell K. Hamilton's first Anita Blake books were a revelation to me. But even then, I never was a partisan the way some readers seem to need to be. I was just on tenterhooks as the narrative unfolded, content to let the writer tell the story. I'm baffled when readers take the stance that they know better than I do what story I want to tell, or what story I OUGHT to tell. Sometimes their investment in one suitor or another is a little overwhelming.

FM: You've spoken openly about being a rape survivor. I certainly don't mean to make light of that, but many writers put their characters through truly awful situations without having lived through such a terrible occurrence themselves. Do you feel like that psychological scar contributes to the dark streak exhibited in your books – a streak that I think many of us who know you personally wouldn't necessarily expect to find in your work, because you are so cheerful and friendly? Or have you always had that sinister edge, regardless of personal trauma?

CH: I've always had a dark side, and I've had other troubles in my life besides the rape. But certainly that was the closest I ever came to death, and that really does focus the mind wonderfully. My life changed profoundly afterward. I know that a writer can write violence without ever having experienced it one-on-one, but believe me, I think my writing is more informed from the darkness, and I also understand how precious life is.

FM: This is *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, so we'd better spend some time talking about HBO's *True Blood*, or the readers might get antsy. I know when the series began, you were happy with it. Obviously it has brought you many new readers and has helped propel you into the top ranks

Photo credit: HBO/Prashant Gupta

of bestsellerdom. But characters, whether they're played by actors or drawn on a page, never look exactly like the author envisioned them. When you had your first glimpse of TV's version of Bon Temps, did you feel like you were looking at something snatched from your brain? Or was it more removed, more like an interpretation of something you had described?

CH: If this doesn't sound incredibly pretentious, it was like looking at my work through someone else's glasses. I had lived with Sookie for so many years by then that at first, I was muttering things like, "But Sookie's bedroom is downstairs, not upstairs" and "Merlotte's doesn't have a pool table." Then I realized that didn't matter, that Alan was getting the spirit of the books right, and the rest was window dressing. He had his own version of the reality of the world of the books.

FM: The first season was loosely based on *Dead Until Dark*, and the second on *Living Dead in Dallas*. Was taking a season to adapt each book – which we at *Famous Monsters* think is a brilliant idea, because it really allows for the book's ideas to be fully developed – Alan Ball's idea? Part of his original concept, or something that came later?

CH: Yes, that was Alan's idea, and I am so happy about it. The writers may not stick to that format, but I hope they do, because that way readers can anticipate the introduction of their favorite characters and their favorite plot developments. Of course, those may or may not happen!

FM: I assume season three will be based on *Club Dead*, and we're excited to know there'll be a fourth season. Is there any moment in the books that you dread seeing adapted for the screen – some bit that you just want left in the books and the books alone? Any bit you can't wait to see them do?

CH: Dread? Yes, the trunk scene in *Club Dead*. That's the most controversial scene in the whole series, and readers are really polarized by its interpretation, which really wasn't what I intended when I wrote it. A bit I can't wait to see them do? Russell Edgington's mansion with its bevy of beautiful men, and Sookie's escape from it with Bill. If the show's writers include that plot twist.

FM: Do you have any day-to-day involvement with the show? Do you get to see scripts in advance, or anything like that? Or at this point is your involvement limited to watching the episodes when they air and cashing the checks?

CH: Once or twice actors have asked me for some insight into their characters, but I certainly don't expect that or even have any very useful advice for them. They have to interpret the character as the show writers hand it to them. I don't see the scripts in advance, but I do usually (not always!) get an advance screener, though sometimes only a day before the show is on the air. I do cash the checks, though.

FM: Tolerance seems to be a central theme of the series. Everyone's life would be so much easier if others would just stop harassing them because of who/what they are. And you are one of the few authors I know who includes a page of



Do you prefer your vampires medium rare or extra crispy? Three stages of Bill's near-fatal "sunburn" from the climactic scenes of the first season.

Photo credits: MastersFX

"important causes" on her website. The impression I get is of someone who is thoughtful and concerned about her world and the people and animals inhabiting it. Without inviting you onto a soapbox (and certainly without meaning to imply that the books are anything but entertaining), do you intentionally layer in a social message? Or is that just something that comes about because of who you are? Or am I reading it in there altogether?

CH: No, by golly! I actually have an agenda, written in from the beginning, and of course it has to do with tolerance and the true nature of monsters. I do support my favorite causes. As long as I have such a wonderfully popular soapbox, I'm going to use it. If people are saying, "gosh, I wish I knew where to send my extra ten dollars," I'm going to make a suggestion if they care to read about it. Operating on the same theory, that's why I mention books I've enjoyed.

FM: Do you have plans to create any new series characters in the future? Or to write more stand-alone books?

CH: Yes.

FM: What's on tap for the rest of this year?

CH: Gosh, I've already had an incredibly busy year. I'm working on a Sookie Companion, which should be out next year in February, if all goes well, and I'm winding up Sookie 11. I have a three-week tour of Australia coming up, and then New England Crime Bake, a mystery convention. There are a few other things still on the back burner that I can't talk about.

FM: Finally, are there any questions you always hope interviewers will ask but that they never do?

CH: Honest to God, I think I've been asked so many questions that I'm tempted to lie to give some variety to my answers. I really can't think of anything!



Almost True Confessions

Season Three Teasers from TRUE BLOOD's Alexander Woo

by April Snellings

From its unsettling opening credit sequence, it's clear that *True Blood* is worlds removed from the sparkling, scrub-faced vamps of *Twilight*. Images of gore-smeared roads and hungry 'gators are buttressed against ramshackle houses, sultry honky tonks and rough-and-tumble river baptisms; it's a perfect microcosm of the lurid, surreal universe of HBO's flagship series.

Since its modestly rated series premiere in September 2008, *True Blood* has gone on to become the network's most watched series since *The Sopranos*. More than five million people watched the dramatic finale of the show's second season; assuming most of those folks return for season three, the pressure is on for the series' creators to raise the stakes on *True Blood*'s already potent cocktail of sex, violence, romance and suspense.

To that end, producer/writer Alexander Woo promises a season of revelations, complications and new beginnings.

"As funny and scary and emotional and sexy as the second season was, we go farther and we move faster and the surprises are more shocking in season three," Woo said during a phone interview from the show's Los Angeles set. "Sookie's world continues to open up, with more surprises about what's out there in terms of supernatural beings, as well as more details about the world the vampires have been living in amongst us."

Season three will introduce a cadre of new characters, many of whom are reader favorites in Charlaine Harris's Southern Vampire series. To Woo, one of the most exciting new characters is Russell Edgington, the vampire king of Mississippi. "He's played by Denis O'Hare, who is a genius and a great, great actor. If you don't know his name, you've seen his face, because he's been in everything."

Besides Edgington, Sookie will also finally encounter the werewolf community. "Another major character that I know a lot of the book fans are looking forward to is Alcide Herveaux, who is a werewolf and a possible suitor for Sookie's affections," Woo said. "We have a fantastic actor named Joe Manganiello, who brings everything you could possibly want in Alcide to life."

Of course, these new characters won't steal the spotlight from *True Blood*'s regulars. "There will be revelations about Sookie (Anna Paquin) in almost every episode," Woo said. "The books and the show are a process of discovery for Sookie, and for the readers and viewers along with her. There are a lot of things she's going to learn in this season about the world outside her, about the people she loves and about herself. That's not just a big cliffhanger at the end of the season – it's all throughout it."

Sookie's brother, Jason Stackhouse (Ryan Kwanten) is on a journey of his own, and Woo offers a tantalizing clue about where that journey will take him in season three: "A lot's in store for Jason. He tried to find himself last year – I think a large part of Jason's entire life quest is to find himself – and that quest takes him to a place that is surprising to him. I think we might find him trying to

make a change in his life. He's been jumping from woman to woman, and he might be tiring of that. Of course, he *is* Jason, so I'm not promising he'll succeed."

Eric Northman (Alexander Skarsgård) will continue to be a major figure in Sookie's world, though, according to Woo, in ways viewers might not expect. We'll also learn more about Sophie-Anne Leclerq (Evan Rachel Wood); the vampire queen of Louisiana was introduced at the end of season two but, as Woo says, "We really just got a hint of her. And it's not just the queen of Louisiana, but the entire vampire hierarchy that becomes fleshed out in greater detail in the third season."

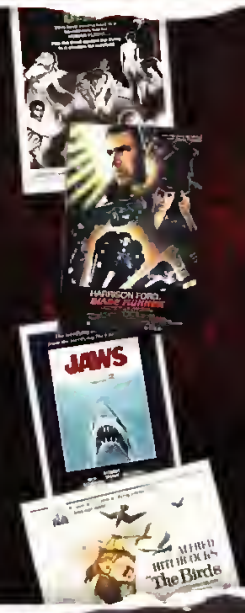
Season three will also see the television debut of Debbie Pelt, one of Harris's most notorious troublemakers. "She will make an appearance, and it's going to be memorable," Woo laughed. "We have a fantastic actress, Brit Morgan. She's going to make quite an impression."

In spite of the show's genre trappings, Woo considers it a character drama at heart. Though he says there will be an increasing sense of wonder and more elaborate visual FX in season three – not to mention more of the show's signature nudity and graphic sex – he is careful to point out that *True Blood*'s most stimulating aspect will continue to be the characters that inhabit its world. "We don't focus on the whiz-bang – the genre elements are very strong as it is, we don't need to focus on it for it to take center stage. What's important to us is that we keep the characters coherent, and surprising, and interesting, and real.

"I have so much fun on the show, I would love it to never end. All we can do is try to make the best show we can, and hopefully HBO will keep renewing us again and again and again."

Catch the third season of *True Blood* throughout this summer on HBO!

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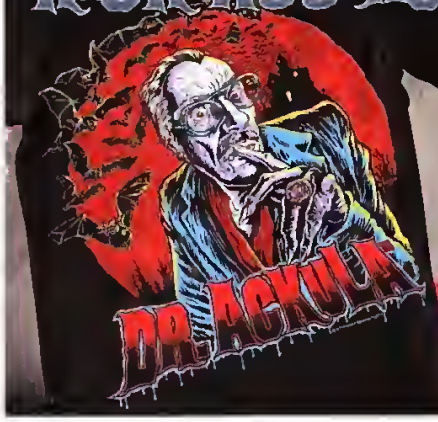
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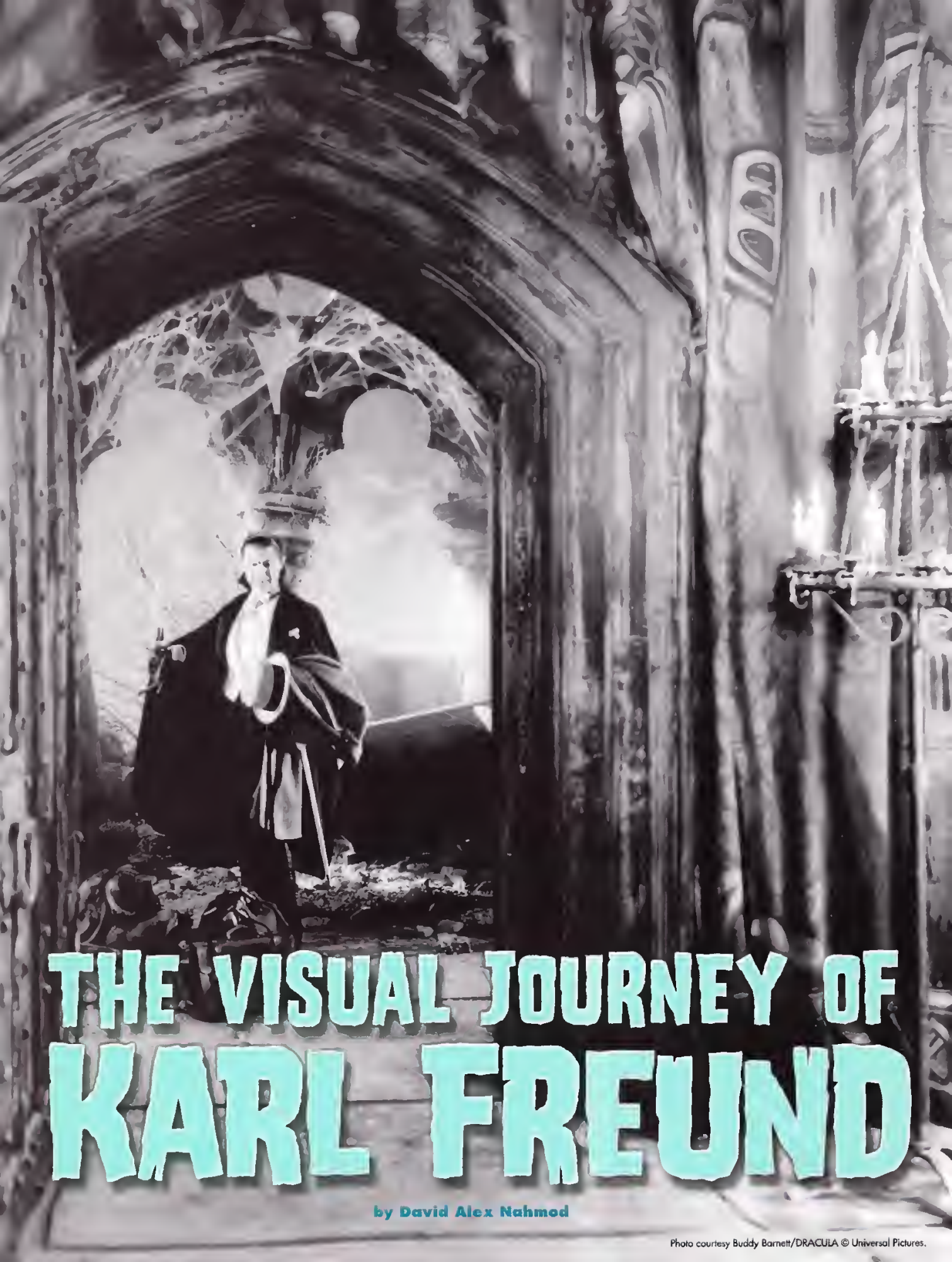
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THE VISUAL JOURNEY OF KARL FREUND

by David Alex Nahmod

Photo courtesy Buddy Barnett/DRACULA © Universal Pictures.

More than anyone, possibly even more than directors James Whale or Tod Browning, it may have been Karl Freund who was most responsible for the look of the early Universal Horrors.

Those classic films stunned audiences in their day – some of them still do. Eerie and unforgettable, the Universal output of the 1930's offers visual poetry unmatched in Hollywood history before or since. Only one other period of filmaking is comparable: the German Expressionist films of ten years prior.

Of all the artists who worked at Universal between 1930 and 1936, and there were more than a few geniuses to be found on the lot, Freund and Freund alone could say that he also worked with Fritz Lang and F.W. Murnau during the heyday of 1920's German cinema.

According to FirstWorldWar.com, it was Freund, working as cinematographer on Universal's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), his first Hollywood film, who suggested the heartbreaking finale in which a weary soldier reaches out to touch a butterfly before getting shot and killed. Some film historians believe that this scene was the deciding factor in winning the film's Best Picture Oscar for that year.

The story makes one wonder how many other ideas of Freund's found their way into the Universal output during his tenure there.

Karl Freund was born on January 16th, 1890, in Bohemia, an ancient district in what is now the Czech Republic. Photographs of the region bring to mind the picturesque towns visited during the heyday of Universal horror.

In 1901, the Freund family moved to Berlin, where young Karl discovered the movies. In 1906, at age 16, he began working as a projectionist for the film company of pioneer producer Alfred Duske. Within two years, he was photographing films for the German branch of Pathe-Freres, working on their weekly newsreels. By 1911, he had made his first film, *Jadra Maijka.* A Google search of the title brings up a few entries that acknowledge Freund's work on the film, but we must assume it to be a lost title.

In 1913, he was hired to photograph a series of films starring the Danish beauty Asta Nielsen. By 1919, he was firmly established in the business and began working independently.

He walked in very tall grass, collaborating with other future-Hollywood luminaries, such as Ernst Lubitsch and Fritz Lang, and with German Expressionist legends like Paul Wegener and F.W. Murnau.

Freund first wound the cameras for Murnau in 1920, when the two made *Der Januskopf,* a long lost version of the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde story that many hope will turn up one day.



Paul Wegener as THE GOLEM (1920). Opposite page: an example of Karl Freund's brilliant eye for composition from DRACULA (1931), starring the legendary Bela Lugosi in the title role.

It was Freund's work on Wegener's 1920 version of *The Golem* where we get our first glance at the kind of camerawork and lighting that came to define horror films of both 1920's Germany and 1930's Universal.

The Golem: How He Came Into the World was the full title of the film. It was a prequel to a film Wegener had made five years prior. In the 1920 film, the Jewish community of 16th Century Prague faces persecution. Rabbi Judah Low (Albert Steinruck) creates a giant man of clay to protect the community, using ancient rituals from the Kabbalah to bring the creature to life. But like Frankenstein's monster, the Golem soon develops a mind of its own...

There's something very otherworldly about *The Golem.* Unlike *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari,* whose sets were surreal painted backdrops, Freund photographed *The Golem* in fully built settings. Everything seems off kilter in the Jewish ghetto: the houses and the rooms twist into odd angles that would never be seen in real settings. It's a nightmarish, bizarro-world variation on how the old city of Prague really looks. We might almost be floating in and out of shadows as we make our way in and out of these strange locales.

Photo credit: Photofest



The sad, solitary doorman (Emil Jannings) in THE LAST LAUGH (1924).

More than any one film, Wegener's *The Golem,* as photographed by Karl Freund, might have foreshadowed what we came to know as Universal Horror.

In 1924, Freund photographed *The Last Laugh* for Murnau. Now acknowledged as one of cinema's all-time great films, *Laugh* is a stunning visual poem, visual being the key word. The story is told sans the title cards that are the hallmarks of silent cinema. Emil Jannings is grand as the sad hotel doorman who yearns for a better life: he lets you into his character's soul through his body language and his eyes. Freund's camera becomes the film's secondary character – if a camera could be nominated for a Supporting Actor Oscar, it would have happened with *The Last Laugh.*

Lillian Gish said that D.W. Griffith gave film its grammar. But it was Freund who freed film from its constraints. There are scenes in *The Last Laugh* where the camera appears to be floating through the air. The effect is not the same as the crane shots we see in Hollywood epics, but something quite different. When the doorman becomes drunk, the camera is used to underscore his lightheadedness. With a few trick effects, the camera shows us, through the doorman's eyes, not only how the alcohol affects what he sees, but how he feels physically.

Two years later, Freund photographed the grandly eerie *Faust,* again for Murnau. As in *The Golem,* the setting of the town is angular and off kilter, not unlike the slightly off-center Paris of the 1840's, which Freund photographed for director Robert Florey in Universal's *Murders in the Rue Morgue* in 1932.

When the giant, bat-like Mephisto (Jannings) appears over the town, it conjures memories of Lugosi draped in his Dracula cape. Freund would point his camera at Lugosi in 1931's *Dracula,* and, in fact, *Dracula* co-star David Manners recalled that Freund directed a few scenes of the film himself, though wasn't credited for this work.

Also in 1926, Freund photographed *Metropolis* for Fritz Lang – the film that Forry Ackerman claimed as his all-time favorite. Today, *Metropolis* is one of the most popular and widely screened films of the Expressionist period.

Metropolis premiered in Berlin with a 153-minute running time. Soon after, many of the prints were cut and even edited, so as to bow to the demands of foreign distributors who refused to release such a long film; theaters could schedule more screenings a day into a shorter film. In some cases, the storyline was altered, and footage was discarded



William Dieterle, Frida Richard and Camilla Horn in a shot displaying the cramped and angular confines of the sets from FAUST (1926).

Photo credits: Photofest/THE LAST LAUGH © UFA; FAUST © MGM



Crazed scientist Rotwang (Rudolf Klein-Rogge) and spiritual leader of the workers Maria (Brigitte Helm) in a scene from the classic and still astonishing METROPOLIS (1927).

and lost. When the film was screened in the USA in 1928, it appeared disjointed.

In 2001, a restored version of *Metropolis*, using newly rediscovered footage culled from various sources, was screened at the Berlin International Film Festival. This print returned much of Lang's intended storyline to the film and included a newly recorded orchestral performance of the 1927 score composed by Gottfried Huppertz.

In 2008, a longer copy of the film was discovered in Argentina, and after over a year's worth of restoration work, a new print with an additional 30 minutes' running time premiered simultaneously in Berlin and Frankfurt in February of this year.

84 years later, *Metropolis* remains a magnificent, if slightly flawed work. The flaws are no fault of Freund. Some scenes, such as those in the office of Metropolis leader Joh Frederson, go on and on with little advancement to the story, but this was caused by Lang's refusal to edit his baby. By the standards of both then and now, *Metropolis* is visually stunning, and this is clearly Freund's doing.

The settings obviously have their roots planted deeply in the Expressionism of the period, but are also streamlined and futuristic. Throughout the film, camera angles become a character, conveying the emotions of those onscreen. A perfect example of this is when the workers shuffle in and out of the factory – the camera is angled to show those leaving and arriving simultaneously as they move in perfect unison. The wide shot effectively captures the pain of their empty existence.

When Frederson visits the ancient home of the mad inventor Rotwang, we once again enter the kind of dark, angular underworld that became a hallmark of Universal horror.

The often told story is that Fritz Lang was offered a post as the official filmmaker for the Third Reich. Lang, who was Jewish, politely accepted the offer and then fled the country immediately. By the time this happened, Freund, who was also Jewish, was already ensconced at Universal. As Freund had previously lived and worked in a number of European cities prior to moving to Hollywwod, it's most likely that he came to California for a job and not because of the Nazi menace. When Freund began work on *Dracula* in 1930, Hitler was not yet widely known to be a threat.

Dracula cast member David Manners gave several interviews before he passed

Photo credit: Photofest/METROPOLIS © UFA



The "uncanny" Boris Karloff and director Karl Freund on the set of THE MUMMY (1932).

on at age 97 in 1998. The former leading man recalled that few on the set took things seriously – they didn't believe in the story. He and onscreen love Helen Chandler giggled a lot, as he told it. The shooting was very disorganized, Manners reported.

Today, *Dracula* is considered a classic. The performances by Bela Lugosi (as the Count) and Dwight Frye (as the fly-eating Renfield) are rightfully lauded, but much of the film is static. Director Tod Browning pointed the camera at his cast and seemingly let them run their lines without paying too much attention to what they were doing. In some scenes, Manners, Chandler and Edward Van Sloan appear to be phoning it in.

One year later, when Freund directed Van Sloan and Manners in *The Mummy,* it was another story entirely. Playing different versions of their *Dracula* characters, both actors were fully present and gave strong, emotional performances.

Tod Browning was always fascinated by the weird and grotesque, but in *Dracula* he may have pushed the envelope a bit too far. Strange little sidebars, such as a cockroach exiting a mini-coffin as Dracula exits his, or the armadillos who wander around the castle, make no sense. It's hard to tell if Browning was serious or trying to inject humor with these shots. Clearly meant to be humorous in *Dracula* was the charater of Martin, the Cockney sanitarium orderly, and the equally Cockney woman he works with. These scenes feel as though they were spliced in from another film.

There are no such gratuities in *The Mummy.* The stories of both films are essentially the same – a supernatural being from the distant past looks for love in the body of the beautiful young present-day woman who must give up her life in order to become his. Can her boyfriend (Manners in both films) and the kindly, wise doctor (Van Sloan in both films) save her life and soul before it's too late?

The supernatural elements in *The Mummy* are more believable, because Freund took the story seriously. Every scene, every line in *Mummy* is essential either for character development or moving the story forward. At 72 minutes, *The Mummy* moves much faster than the 75-minute *Dracula.*

In addition to the magnificent acting of Lugosi and Frye, it's Freund's camera that elevates Dracula to classic status. When shooting *Dracula,* Browning often forgot that a movie is supposed to *move.* Once the "action" moves to London, things pretty much stand still; some scenes look more like photographs than motion picture sequences.

A number of sources stated that Browning often ignored Freund's suggestions, but Freund managed to get a few of his ideas into the final cut. When the camera glides through Castle Dracula, it brings to mind the "floating" shots Freund created back in Germany. There's also an incredible tracking shot up, down and across the grounds of Steward Sanitarium that's breathtaking.

These same kinds of shots can be seen throughout *The Mummy.* Director Freund again "floats" his camera, this time across the hallowed halls of the British Museum in Cairo. There's also an unforgettable scene where the camera literally flies over the backs and heads of Boris Karloff and Zita Johann, into the pool of water that takes them

Photo courtesy Buddy Barnett/THE MUMMY © Universal Pictures.

back to ancient Egypt. At a time when movies didn't always "move," such a high level of photography was rarely seen in films lacking Freund's involvement.

Compare *The Mummy*'s cinematography not only to *Dracula*'s static, stage bound London scenes, but to Browning's earlier *The 13th Chair* (1929), a fascinating whodunit featuring Lugosi, and the difference betwen the two directors becomes even more obvious. *Chair* is another "drawing room chiller" in which characters discuss spooky events over tea, but the camera is never used to the advancement of the plot or to create a mood. Browning had a talent for finding bizarre and fascinating stories, and for casting them well, but Freund was moving the entire cinema art form forward.

This can be seen in 1932's *Murders in the Rue Morgue,* which Freund photographed for director Robert Florey. Lugosi gives another grandly frightening performance as the mad Dr. Mirakle, who's determined to prove that man and ape are related. Unfortunately, Florey slows the story down with gratuitous love scenes and long, decidedly unfunny comic interludes. As in *Dracula*, the horrific and comedic scenes appear to be from different films. Again, it's Lugosi's acting and Freund's camera that save the day.

Murders in the Rue Morgue is one of the darkest films in the Universal canon – it's a dreamlike shadow play. The camera never points directly at anyone or anything, but instead looks at everything from all kinds of odd angles. The influence of German Expressionism is evident throughout *Murders*. People enter rooms that are simply too big to be real. The corners of the rooms disappear into the shadows, the rooms themselves are oddly angled. This all serves to create a surreal atmosphere, and is not unlike the work Freund did on *The Golem* and *Faust*. There's no question that Karl Freund was, at the very least, largely responsible for bringing the Expressionistic look to Hollywood.

The Mummy was, of course, a huge success, and Freund embarked on a brief career as a director – his directoral resume



A shot from MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE (1932), showcasing the film's striking, German Expressionist-inspired set design, as well as Freund's eye for framing the scene.

Photo courtesy Buddy Barnett/MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE © Universal Pictures.

includes 1934's *Gift of Gab*, a musical comedy featuring future *Titanic* star Gloria Stuart and including cameos by Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi.

The following year, 1935, he moved over to the prestigious MGM, for what would inexplicably turn out to be his directoral swan song.

In the Hollywood of the 1930's, MGM was considered to be the ultimate studio. Their musicals, costume epics and star-studded dramas were the top grossing and most revered films of the period. When Louis B. Mayer and Irving Thalberg saw Universal's success with the monster movies, MGM decided to put their gloss on the horror genre.

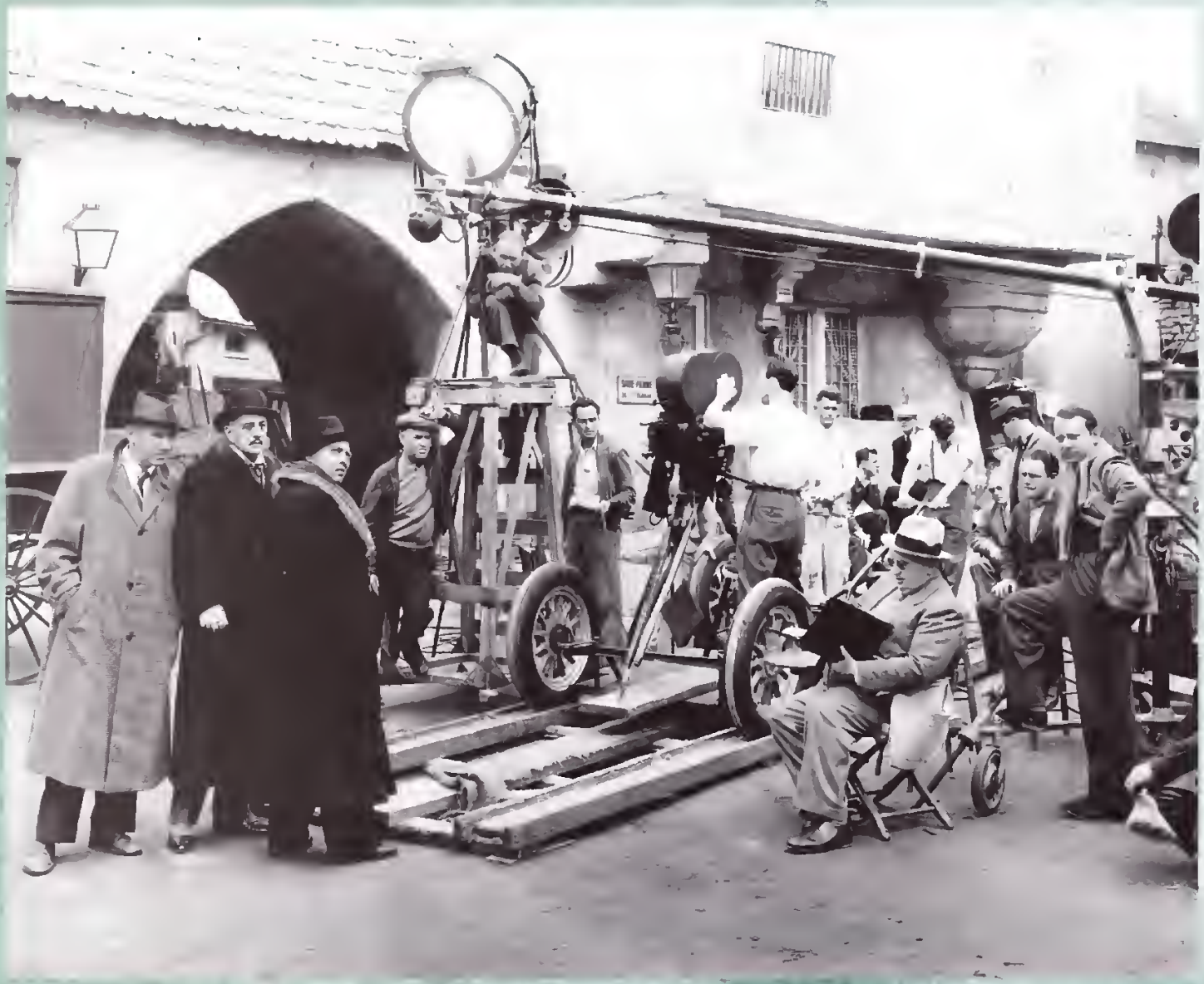
They were not successful in this venture. Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932), his finest and most serious work, shocked and disgusted audiences with its depictions of the lives of actual deformed people living and working in a circus side show.

Browning's *Mark of the Vampire* (1935) is a fun, silly remake of his lost Lon Chaney silent *London After Midnight*. It's elavated by some delightful hamming by Lugosi, spoofing his Dracula image, and by the vampish Carroll Borland, the only fan in horror film history who got to co-star in a major studio film with the object of her affections.

Both flopped.

Freund's *Mad Love* did a bit better at the box office, though not by much, but is now viewed as a classic. Based on the novel *The Hands of Orlac, Mad Love* features a chilling performance by Peter Lorre, another German expatriate, who made his American screen debut herein. As the giddily insane Dr. Gogol, Lorre terrifies as a surgeon whose obsessive love with the wife (Frances Drake) of a patient pushes him over the edge.

The patient is Stephen Orlac (Colin Clive), a famous pianist



On the set of MAD LOVE. When you need to find the director, look for the only guy who gets to sit down!

Photo courtesy Buddy Barnett/MAD LOVE © MGM

who loses his hands in a train accident. Dr. Gogol grafts the hands of a recently executed murderer onto Orlac's wrists. The young man soon finds himself with strange, inexplicable knife-throwing abilities.

Lorre and Clive are magnificent as two very haunted men. Their performances are strong; each actor is present and accounted for in every single scene.

As with *The Mummy,* every scene, every shot, every plot twist and every line of dialogue is designed to either move the story forward or peer into the characters' souls.

This very strong film features much of the director's fluid camera movements, and more than a few scenes which further reveal the effect of German Expressionism on Freund's work. In particular, the wonderfully ridiculous, gargantuan monstrosity that Gogol calls home suggests that one is crossing a threshold into another world whenever one enters it.

As in *Murders in the Rue Morgue,* the rooms are too big to be real, the angular backgrounds often disappearing into odd angles and shadows. One almost expects ghosts to be afoot. There are none – only warm memories of shots taken by Freund for *The Golem, Faust, Metropolis,* inside Castle Dracula and in the halls of the Rue Morgue.

No one knows why Freund stopped directing after *Mad Love.* Perhaps he preferred to crank the cameras. More than two decades of work still lay before him. He photographed many classic films outside the horror genre, including 1937's *The Good Earth,* which garnered him an Academy Award for cinematography. Karl Freund is the only member of the Universal Horrors team, cast or crew, to even recieve a nomination. That he won the coveted prize says volumes about the quality of his work.

In 1937, Freund returned briefly to Germany. Hitler was in power, and the real-life horrors of the Holocaust were underway. Freund's daughter, Gerda Maria, returned to the United States with him, but his ex-wife stayed behind for reasons unknown. In 1942, Susette Freund was taken to Ravensbruck Concentration Camp where she was murdered.

Back in Hollywood, Freund continued with his distinguished cinematography career, though *Mad Love* proved to be both his directoral and horror swan song. The list of highly regarded classics from other genres that he worked on is long and impressive: *Golden Boy, Pride and Prejudice, A Guy Named Joe, To Have and Have Not* and many, many others. He eventually amassed over one hundred credits, pointing his camera at luminaries such as Greta Garbo, Tracy and Hepburn, Bogart and Bacall, and Hedy Lamarr.



The great Peter Lorre in the most outrageous (if not most shocking) scene from MAD LOVE (1935).

As the 1950's approached, he contemplated retirement. Then he got a call that would move his career into a whole new arena: Desi Amaz, a personal fan of Freund's work, asked him to be the director of photography on a new TV show starring his wife, to be called *I Love Lucy.*

Freund saw this as an oppurtunity to further advance the technical abilities of the camera: it was he who developed the three-camera system still in use in today's television production. Every time you watch the news, listen to the ladies chatting it up on *The View,* or check out the latest happenings on your favorite soap opera, you're watching a show produced with the system that was perfected by Karl Freund.

Freund photographed 149 of the 179 *Lucy* episodes that were produced between 1951-1957. During this period, he also photographed 106 episodes of the Desilu (the Lucy/Desi production company) produced sitcom *Our Miss Brooks.*

Karl Freund passed from this mortal coil on May 3, 1969. He was 79 years old and left behind a body of work that still inflences today. His work may never be forgotten. He rests in Hollywood's Mount Sinai Memorial Park, where those who admire his contributions to film and television history may pay their respects.



Photo credit: Photofest/MAD LOVE © MGM



LIFE BEFORE AFTERLIFE

What to expect from the next chapter of the RESIDENT EVIL film series

by Jessie Lilley

The last thing I ever wanted to do was get involved in what I assumed was another hash up of the Apocalypse on film; even worse, the idea of the film was purportedly based on a video game. I was not looking forward to the three DVDs that had been glaring at me from the top of the TV for a full week. Finding myself with some free time early one morning, however, I admitted defeat and sat myself down – fortified with some strong coffee – to view the films. Imagine my astonishment when about 10 minutes into the first film I realized I was enjoying myself. Either I'm getting less picky in my doings or this film is actually pretty good.

A little history: *Resident Evil* is based on the Capcom PlayStation game of the same name (it's called *Biohazard* in Japan, which is where the game originated). We won't dwell on the game itself, other than to note the basic premise: learn the mystery of the Mansion while vanquishing zombies, and escape alive.

The Axeman cometh. You better runneth! From RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE.

Resident Evil finds our heroine, Alice, in the Mansion, not knowing who she is. She is rounded up, along with Matt the Cop, and brought to the Hive, via a fancy and high-speed subway. There, Alice and Matt meet up with some other characters (Spence, Rain, Kaplan and J.D.) who quickly band together to be the good guys. As her memory returns, Alice becomes aware of the fact that while she's an Umbrella employee, she is also out to blow the lid off the place by helping to smuggle a T-Virus sample out of that corporation's underground lair.

It should be noted that there are elements of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* all through this film. Milla Jovovich's character is *named* Alice, but that's only the first reference. Note the mirrored entrance to the underground which forces our little band to step through the looking glass (if you will) and enter the realm of the Red Queen, the Hive's answer to the HAL 9000. It's no accident that the Red Queen's first kill is a beheading, and of course, much of the testing done regarding the T-Virus is done on white rabbits.

We reference *Through the Looking-Glass* as well, wherein Alice views several versions of herself in said glass, albeit only briefly, and we draw another parallel with the introduction of the White Queen. However, when we consider Carroll's Alice as the child that she is, with no power over the laws of the adult world, not to mention no leveling characters in *RE* as there are in Wonderland, i.e., the Cheshire Cat or the Caterpillar, the parallels fall apart. *RE*'s Alice is no child, and while she has little control over the powers that be, she makes a fine stand in taking control of her own destiny within her world. Carroll's Alice never had that chance. One way or another, though, there's definitely a Lewis Carroll fan in the wood pile.

The first film moves along with zombies popping up at the worst moments, a super baddie referred to as the Licker, relentlessly pursuing our heroes (who are dropping like flies, by the way – not to mention the wayside), but eventually, Alice makes it back to the Mansion. She is once more thwarted, this time by a collection of insistent scientists, intent on dragging her right back to where they came from. Alice kicks and claws and gets nowhere but sedated. She wakes to find she is able to extract herself, leaves the hospital and steps into a world peopled by T-Virus mutants and those who are trying to escape them.

Resident Evil: Apocalypse opens hours after the initial outbreak and Alice finds she now has superhero powers – a happy by-product of the experiments performed on her while sedated.

She once again escapes only to be killed, bagged and whisked off to Chicago where the ever-present Umbrella scientists set about "healing" her. She comes to herself in a water tank, completely healed and being studied by Dr. Isaacs, whom she informs, "My name is Alice and I remember everything."

Resident Evil: Extinction opens to the astonishing news that nuking Raccoon City did not eradicate the T-Virus. Umbrella wasn't able to do anything to stop it, and within months, the entire world was affected.

Enter Super Duper Alice, who, having been in the clutches



Another of the unpleasant mutations from this year's AFTERLIFE.

Photo credit: Jeremy Bolt

RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE © 2010 Constantin Film International GmbH & Davis Films/Impact Pictures Inc.

of Dr. Isaacs in Chicago, has developed even more superhero powers, including psionic abilities. Isaacs, now infected with the T-Virus, has been slated for liquidation. In his lab, he injects himself with his handy-dandy antidote but he uses too much, goes nuts and kills everyone in the joint. The White Queen (sister of the Red Queen) locks him in his lab, leaving the way clear for Alice to proceed through the facility unmolested.

Umbrella is now operating from their Japanese location and through the magic of high-tech facilities that still work even though 95% of the planet's life forms are mindless flesh eaters, Alice appears at the board meeting with a clone beside her and rows upon rows of pods in the background – pods that are slowly giving birth to more and more Alice clones. She informs Japan that they are on their way, and one assumes it's not for a tea party. As Alice eyes her pods, the credits roll.

What I particularly like about these films is that they are self-contained stories. There are plenty of openable doors if you wish to take the story to the next step, or it can be left alone. In this age of sequel upon sequel upon sequel, I find that to be most refreshing.

What I don't like is the terse and staccato delivery of the lines and the fact that there is no actual conversation going on in the film. Much like the game it is based on, the movie presents no real humanity in the characters. Kudos then, to the actors who took this limited dialogue and managed to get this jaded old viewer to actually care about them, particularly Ms. Jovovich, whose ice-queen character could easily be dismissed as an anti-hero.

Several hours later, having gotten thoroughly involved with all three films in the series, I found myself looking forward to the unexpected fourth episode in the series.

It's not news that series overseer Paul W.S. Anderson had been privy to Cameron's new 3D process early on and was actually filming RE with the same technique, rather than tossing 3D in as an afterthought to ride along on the success of *Avatar,* as some have done recently.

Being thoroughly unschooled in 3D (I know how to put on the glasses, but that's all), and being the only person on the planet that has not yet seen *Avatar,* I was not thrilled with the prospect of *Resident Evil* going the way of William Castle. Anderson himself was coming back to direct this film, having been otherwise engaged when the second and third installments were being made, I was truly unhappy thinking he was about to turn his neat little series into a difficult-to-watch gimmick flick. As a result, I determined to find someone who knew his onions where 3D was concerned and find out what I could to put my mind at rest.

I banged around for a while trying to locate this mythical sage when my publisher Philip Kim stepped in and put me in touch with Kristyn Humphreys, who put me in touch with Ray Zone, who literally wrote the book (*Stereoscopic Cinema and the Origins of 3D Films 1838-1952* from University Press of Kentucky) on 3D. My thanks to all involved for the connection.

Ray, wonderfully generous with his time, gave me a crash course in stereoscopic cinema from the early days to the present.

My first question: how does the 3D of the William Castle films of the 50s differ from what James Cameron did with *Avatar?*

"When you say William Castle, I need to clarify something. He made a film called *Drums of Tahiti* with Dennis O'Keefe in 3D. I think there were a couple of others that he actually made in the dual-band twin strip 3D process, so he actually is a 3D filmmaker. If you're thinking that *13 Ghosts* was a 3D film, though, it was not. It used a process called Illusion-O, which did use red and blue filters in the ghost viewer, but the red and blue filters were used to give the viewer an option to either see the ghosts or to not see them. He was one of the great gimmick filmmakers of all time."

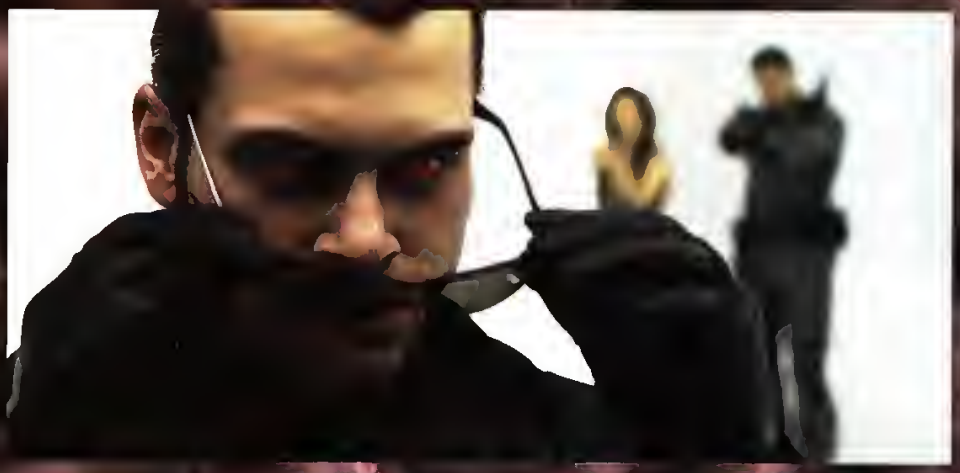
Now that he had that cleared up, Ray moved on to the meat of the discussion.

"3D films have been made for over a century, prior to the release of the 1950's 3D films, particularly *Bwana Devil,*



Ali Larter and Milla Jovovich return to their roles as Claire and Alice in RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE. There's an Umbrella joke to be made here... we'll get back to you when we think of one.

Photo credit: RAFY



Shawn Roberts steps into the role of the evil Albert Wesker in AFTERLIFE.

which launched the boom. So from the very beginning of the invention of cinema and photography, the inventors were trying to create moving 3D images that had color and sound.

"All 3D is fundamentally the same in principle. That means you have two movies: a left-eye movie and a right-eye movie that you have to watch to see 3D. The left-eye movie is taken from the left-eye point of view, and the right-eye, the right. In the 50's the movies in 3D were projected with two projectors, showing the left-eye filmstrip and the right-eye filmstrip with two projectors that were interlocked to stay in sync, and the movies were shot with two cameras that were interlocked.

"A misconception about the 50s 3D films is that they were shown in red/blue or red/green anaglyphic 3D. In fact, they were not. They were all shown in polarizing dual strip projection on a silver screen. There were a couple of anaglyph films, but for some weird reason, there is this widespread – false – cultural memory that the 50s films were shown in anaglyph."

I recalled viewing *Creature From the Black Lagoon* at a theater out in the wilds of New Jersey sometime in the 80s or 90s and, based on my short lesson thus far, I *know* it was anaglyph. So how could that be, if this master said it wasn't?

"In the 70s, Universal did make anaglyphic red/blue prints of both *Creature From the Black Lagoon* and *It Came From Outer Space* – so that it could be shown with a conventional movie projector, single strip, and on a regular white screen with the audience using red and blue glasses to see it in 3D. So that may be why people think the 50's 3D films were seen in anaglyph."

So, I wondered, when did 3D come back? I discovered, to my astonishment, that it had never *really* gone away. It's been hiding out in the back alleys of monsterdom, just waiting for its chance – having expanded, Cthulhu-like – to spring out onto an unsuspecting public and take over the film industry once and for all.

"In the 80s, we had 3D movies that used single strip 35 mm 3D technology; these movies took the left and right eye images of the action and stacked them on top of each other. With a mirror device in front of the projector, the single strip 3D was split out so that the left eye was delivered on screen through one polarizer, and the right through another. Linear polarizing filters are what make 3D work in the cinema; with the use of a silver screen, it does what is called conserving the polarization which is transmitting the light at a specific angle so that the left eye sees the left-eye movie and the right eye, the right.

"Perhaps the best-made 3D film from that decade was *Friday the 13th Part III*. It opened August 13, 1982, and it did great box office. It was the first day and date 3D release that opened in over a thousand theaters at the same time. That kind of widespread day and date release with a 3D film had never happened before."

For me, the 80s were a lost decade where filmgoing was concerned, so this was truly all news to me. I resurfaced in the 90s, but the work I was doing then concerned classic horror and mystery so I never saw what came next.

"Late in the decade and into the 90s the IMAX 3D process arrived and that kept 3D movies alive. The IMAX format uses what's called 15/70. It's 70 mm film that travels horizontally through the projector so that each frame of film is 15 perforations wide. That frame size is nearly 10 times the size of a conventional 35 mm frame, and of course they are projected – two of them, dual bands – upon a giant silver screen, eight stories high.

"In 2004, *The Polar Express* came out in IMAX 3D. You could only see *The Polar Express* 3D in IMAX or in a regular cinema, and that marked the beginning of a trend which continues today. When a film is released in 3D and 2D, the 3D version of the film makes three times the box office of the 2D version. That's the huge factor driving 3D cinema today.

"When digital 3D cinema began in 2005 that held true: *Chicken Little* in 3D, and it was released simultaneously on film in 2D, to a couple of thousand theaters—and digitally in 3D to about 85 digital 3D cinemas. A significant portion of the box office for *Chicken Little* was earned by a very small number of 3D theaters."

And so we arrive at last at James Cameron's blockbuster.

"With the release on December 18, 2009, of *Avatar*, 3D movies truly came of age. *Avatar* is the longest 3D movie ever made, with a running time of 2 hours and 40 minutes. It was released on IMAX 3D, digital 3D cinemas and any number of digital 3D formats that we



Actor Thomas Jane takes a turn behind the camera for the 3D feature DARK COUNTRY.

now have. We have several processes for 3D digital movies and *Avatar* was released in them all. In a very short period of time, *Avatar* not only gained really good, solid critical notices from the major film critics, but it became the top box office film of all time, earning something like 2.7 billion dollars (as of this writing, May 2010), and moving ahead of *Titanic* which was formerly number one in the box office.

"The most spectacular thing that James Cameron did with *Avatar* was to make a 3D film that was not gimmicky; it was used for stereoscopic storytelling in a way that was emotionally moving. He truly achieved an integrated work of cinematic art buy using 3D in the same way that sound and color and widescreen had been used previously for cinematic storytelling. Cameron's technology was enormously sophisticated and he invented new camera technology to integrate the live-action capture – the performance capture – with the computer-generated 3D background.

"So all of this means that 3D has come of age as a business, as a form of art and a regular ongoing part of cinema. We will see films that have been shot in 2D and converted to 3D, like *Clash of the Titans* and *Alice in Wonderland,* both of which used live action that was shot 2D and converted to 3D. The tool set for 3D movie makers includes shooting live action in 3D, creating CG 3D and stereo conversion of 2D material to 3D and we will see increasingly, the filmmakers who are making 3D movies, mix and match this variety of tools for this stereoscopic storytelling."

I have read reviews of both *Avatar* and *Clash of the Titans* and noticed that people are not as happy with *Clash* as they were with *Avatar* – and it had nothing to do with the story, it had to do with the effects. So what happened?

"Conversion of flat movies is an art form. If you practice an art form and you have to create a finished work of art in a very short period of time, it's not going to be as good as a work that has sufficient time to be converted to 3D. That was the case with *Clash of the Titans*. James Cameron took five years to make *Avatar* and late in the day, executives at Warner Brothers – eight weeks before release – decided to convert *Clash* to 3D to cash in on the box office. As a result, the 3D has a lot of mistakes in it... because they hired armies of people to convert it to 3D and did not give them enough time to do it properly. It was a solid executive decision if the money is the only question."

Having set my mind to rest regarding *Resident Evil: Afterlife,* and setting my tooth for September when the film is slated to open, I wanted to be sure to give Ray the opportunity to crow a bit about his own 3D project: Thomas Jane's *Dark Country.*

"*Dark Country* is an innovation in filmmaking technology. It is the first 3D film to use silicon imaging heads for stereoscopic capture of the live-action photography."

This was something we hadn't yet discussed and I wanted to know what he meant.

"It means it was captured digitally in 3D, and at the time it was shot, in late 2007, nobody had used this technology. It was brand new. It was what the 3D technician on the shoot, Max Penner, called a 'science project.' Max is the man at Paradise FX who assembled the rig to shoot *Dark Country* in 3D."

And what is *Dark Country* about?

"The story is Edgar Ulmer's *Detour* in The Twilight Zone. It is an intimate drama in the way that *Detour* is, with two people in a car, going into the nightmare of the dark country. It's set entirely in the nighttime, in the desert."

So, congratulations all around to Ray and Thomas Jane, James Cameron and his extraordinary innovations and to the fans of the fantastic; as Ray says, 3D is here to stay and that can only bode well for the unexpected fourth chapter in the *Resident Evil* series and filmgoers worldwide. To the future!

Photo courtesy Ray Zone


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Remembering Forry



the friends and fans of Forrest J Ackerman celebrate
the life of the most famous of famous monsters

Photo courtesy Forrest J Ackerman Trust

The Freedom to Remember

Forrest J Ackerman Remembered

by Brad Linaweaver

Forrest J Ackerman was the best friend science fiction ever had. The man who loved Frankenstein movies would appreciate the observation that he was more than the sum of his parts. He was an agent. He was an editor. He was a writer. He was an actor. He was a splendid raconteur. He was the supreme collector.

But more than any of that was the importance of his love affair with what he called Sci-Fi. Some of us throw up artificial barriers between science fiction, fantasy and horror. Forry knew better. We may wonder if that strange creature trampling us is an alien or a monster, but Mr. Ackerman would run the same picture in his seminal film magazines *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and *Spacemen*. The same picture.

Is that giant robot on the horizon a tool, a friend or an enemy? It all depends on the point of view. As children we learned empathy and how to make distinctions from a number of unlikely sources. Perhaps FJA was the best.

Our kindly uncle was that rarest of aliens, a welcome teacher.

He was the Walt Disney of science fiction! He took us on a time machine, borrowed from H.G. Wells, and showed us that the past still lived in his favorite city, the Gothic futurama of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. Forry invited us into the lair of Rotwang, the mad scientist's house; but here was an old house haunted not by ghosts, but by dreams of the future.

The Ackermonster built his own magical castle on several occasions at different locations. The most famous was the mansion on Glendower with its Lovecraftian basement for the kids, Grislyland. Wherever he lived, he made it Hollyweird, Karloffornia, surrounded by loved ones and loved objects. He departed the world at the age of 92 in his own Mad Lab.

His lifelong friend, Ray Bradbury, was in contact with him in his final days. Along with another friend, Ray Harryhausen, these men made an indelible mark on the imagination of the world.

They were members of LASFS, America's oldest science fiction club. Robert A. Heinlein was a member back then, as well. Those were golden days in Los Angeles before World War II.

The battle for freedom never ends. Appropriately, as a close friend of the author of *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury, Forry was a lifelong opponent of censorship. In common with J.R.R. Tolkien, Forry knew that those who condemn escapist literature are actually jailers. Young minds should be free citizens of the Imagi-Nation.

Forry often said if he ever wrote an autobiography the title would be *I Never Met Jules Verne*. Think about that. Whether writing a script for a Boris Karloff record album or befriending Bela Lugosi, he who was known as the poor man's Vincent Price always found time to blast off in a private rocket ship and attend the World Science Fiction Convention. He wore the first Worldcon costume (inspired by *Things to Come*) in 1939 and received the first Hugo from the hands of Isaac Asimov in 1953. He was the premier science fiction fan, enjoying the highlights of the 20th century on his journey to the 21st.

How appropriate that he would be the literary agent of A.E. van Vogt for many of those decades – a grandmaster of science fiction who came up with so many memorable aliens that influenced generations of movie monsters.

A unique gift that Forry offered to young fans of several generations was a long road to the future that wound gently through the past. Apprentice barbarians were civilized to the point of being able to sit through silent movies. Unlike their contemporaries, they developed an attention span. Because of Uncle Forry they even managed to read the long sentences and absorb the vocabulary of 19th century writers. On a journey to the center of the Earth we encounter Dracula and the Frankenstein Monster, both of whom complain that they have been prematurely interred.

An encyclopedia could be produced listing all those who received inspiration from Forry to pursue careers in the entertainment field. The famous, the not so famous, the infamous, the obscure, we all have our stories.

The importance of Forrest J Ackerman to the development of science fiction and horror in the entertainment industry having been established, I wish to briefly address the importance of my friendship with him. We were friends. He had a remarkable life that ended in December 2008 at the age of 92 and his influence will never end.

Over the years he not only helped my career but I watched him do a lot to help the careers of friends and associates. I specifically promoted writers, artists and actresses to Forry. He helped them all and I hope in time they will tell their stories. There can never be too many articles and books about this man.

My story begins as one of the many fans he taught to have a Sense of Wonder. We learned the battle cry: "Gosh Wow!" As a teenager I sent a letter to *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and was thrilled when he published it in 1970, issue #64.

Little did I know that a year later Forry would be introducing me to Robert Bloch at the first science fiction convention I ever attended on the alien planet of Dallas, Texas. That ultimately led to my favorite of eighty short story sales; "Clutter" appeared in Bloch's 1991 anthology *Psycho-Paths* (Tor Books), about a fan who represents all of us who grew up

as sci-fi children of the Ackermonster.

Over the years, Forry influenced other stories that I wrote.

"The Lon Chaney Factory" was dedicated to him and appeared in the anthology *When the Black Lotus Blooms* (Unnameable Press). Forry reprinted it in his magazine *Monsterama* as the cover feature.

When I wrote a story about H.G. Wells for E.J. Gold's *Galaxy*, I couldn't think of a good title. Forry came up with "Wells of Wisdom" and promoted the story that not only was published but also made it on to the Nebula Preliminary Ballot – although it wasn't a Finalist like *Moon of Ice* – and also received a dramatic audio reading by actress Catherine Oxenberg.

But wait, there's more! I sold two stories to the FJA anthology, *Rainbow Fantasia*, published by Sense of Wonder Press. I made Forry the monster expert in the third *Doom* novel, *Infernal Sky*, part of the best-selling series I did with Dafydd ab Hugh for Pocket Books. Why, that's the one where the heroic spacemen and spacewomen are passing around a book by Ludwig von Mises.

Right after I finished working on the manuscript, Forry invited me to his house to be part of a BBC documentary on *Frankenstein* entitled *Building the Perfect Beast*. That's almost as unbelievable as the fact that Forry also appears in the novel version of *Moon of Ice* that won the Prometheus Award, given out by the Libertarian Futurist Society.

Of course, none of this fulfilled my childhood dream of writing for *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. That came true in the mid-90's when I contributed to the Dynacomm FM. I did a feature on Fred Olen Ray and Jim Wynorski's *Dinosaur Island* and memorial pieces on Vincent Price and Robert Bloch. I even persuaded William F. Buckley, Jr. to make a contribution!

But I only contributed to the magazine when Forry was editor. After his falling out with publisher Ray Ferry, I testified in court on Forry's behalf when he was defending his intellectual property rights. As a result, the Dynacomm publisher attacked me in his book. Forry won his case and his attorney said that I helped. That is one of the proudest moments of my life. Since then I have learned that you only know your true friends when your back is to the wall.



Brad Linaweaver and Forry.

Photo credit: Lenny J. Provenzano. Courtesy Brad Linaweaver.

After the FM debacle, the good guys at the magazine *Cult Movies* agreed we should do something on behalf of Forry. Buddy Barnett, Mike Copner and I (as Rocket Engineer on the editorial credits) brought back *Spacemen* as part of a number of special *Cult Movies/Spacemen* double issues. Forry loved the rebirth of his science fiction movie magazine.

In the end, Forry taught all of us to trust the creative geniuses who inspired us to enter the world of science fiction in the first place. Ah, nostalgia.

The greatest honor Forry ever gave me was an invitation to co-author *Worlds of Tomorrow: The Amazing Universe of Science Fiction Art* for Collectors Press. Gosh WOW, indeed! We did a signing at the San Diego Comic-Con in 2004 and signed our names so many times that we needed Asimovian positronic hand replacements.

My final magazine work with Forry was in collaboration with Jessie Lilley. She and I do a pop culture magazine called *Mondo Cult* and Forry contributed a really nice piece on the lost spider sequence from the original *King Kong*. He also appears as Dr. Acula in photographs provided by Irena Belle Films.

On March 8, 2009, I was privileged to be one of the speakers honoring Forry's memory at a memorial event at the Egyptian in Hollywood, attended by over 500 invaders from the infinite. FJA's longtime friend Ray Bradbury was the first speaker of many. In the company of film directors such as John Landis, Joe Dante, Guillermo del Toro and other luminaries, the Tingler in my spinal cord started to grow, warning me not to screw up. I relied heavily on the first part of this article. The line about Forry Ackerman being the Walt Disney of science fiction was greatly appreciated along with this observation: "He's the guy who introduced the monster fans to the spaceship fans. The science fiction and horror genres collided."

We were influenced in our childhoods more than we will ever know.

(NOTE: In 2003, Brad and Ed Kramer created a Dragoncon award inspired by Forry to honor science fiction and fantasy, the Futura Award, a pewter sculpture cast by L.J. Dopp based on Maria, the female robot from Forry's all-time favorite movie, *Metropolis*. Maybe Dr. Frankenstein can bring this award back to life in the future.)

Other versions of this article have been previously published in both PROMETHEUS and SCARY MONSTERS.

Dear Forry

He was a wonderful man who, although somewhat eccentric, was a warm-hearted friend and colleague. I suppose I would have been in my teens when I first encountered the young Forry. After going to see *King Kong* at the Hawthorn picture house I noticed some stills on display in the foyer. These stills were owned by Forry, and so I went to see him and he loaned them to me. I copied them, and it was those images that were such an important source of inspiration for me. From that time onwards we were firm friends along with the third Musketeer, Ray Bradbury.

Forry not only helped me in the early days but continued to help young film and fantasy enthusiasts until his death. He would arrange meetings for the young to meet the older, and that is where I first met Phil Tippett and many other budding animators.

Thanks, Forry, for your friendship and wonderful humor.

– Ray Harryhausen

Because of Forry

Forry and I have a history together, for sure, in a different manner – nonetheless it's all been pretty good. We first met in the 80s. They were trying to find out if there were any living relatives of Lon and they found me in the book. It was through Forry's direction that it happened.

It was for the release of *Lon of a Thousand Faces*. I collected quite a few of my family members, and we all went to LA for the release of the book. I believe they showed *The Phantom of the Opera* that night with organ accompaniment. It awoke some of my boyhood dreams again – of getting back into my family's business. It was quite an evening, and that was my first meeting with Forry. I think it was 1983 and though it was the first time we'd met, I'd known of him through the magazine. When my grandfather (Lon, Jr.) was working on his book, there were several FM's around for reference I'd noticed, even though at that time I was more into sports than monsters. Forry was a very generous man; he gave me quite a few of the first edition hardbacks for the whole family to share – and he said we'd meet again.

Ten years later we were invited out to the FM Convention in 1993 in Crystal City, VA. I was introduced to all the fans, and that was quite special for me and for my family. Most of the family members were of the opinion that Lon was remembered in Hollywood, but to find that he still had fans from around the world, and so many of them, was pretty exciting. I was blown away – I'd never been in a public place where so many people had their attention focused on me. I wasn't used to it and it was all very thrilling. That was all possible because of the gentleman I knew named Forry Ackerman. I finally was



able to visit the Ackermansion and over the years we grew quite fond of each other. We shared a personal friendship and were always pleased to run into each other at the many horror shows across the country, and of course, I shared pie with him. I learned of this lovely tradition and am pleased to be able to say that I've "broken pie" with Forry.

The most important thing for me, though, is having the opportunity to meet my family's fans. When Gramps was so ill, Forry ran an article about it in FM. I don't think Gramps really wanted that – he didn't want the publicity or the attention at that point – but Forry did it anyway. The letters Forry received were all forwarded to the house, and the response from that was phenomenal. I still have a lot of those letters from kids of all ages. It just thrilled Gramps; it raised his spirits tremendously – again, all because of Forry. One day I plan to finish that book and I'll include a chapter on those wonderful fans.

So much of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* had to do with my great grandfather Lon, Sr. and his effect on Forry. At one time Forry wrote that he was pleased to have gotten to know me and that the Chaney Legacy was in good hands. I've never

Photo courtesy Forrest J Ackerman Trust

forgotten that; it was such a wonderful thing to say and means so much to me.

I have one other thing to say about Forry – were I ever to have a memorial like he did, it would be a wonderful day. It was just so typically Forry; he was up there on the screen and signing off – one couldn't help but think that was pretty cool and realize that rather than feeling sad, you felt true joy at having known him. I was so happy to join with Forry and Joe Moe and all the others that were there that night, to celebrate him.

– Ron Chaney

The Beacon

Uncle Forry was the beacon who brought all the Monster kids together. He ushered us in and let us know that we weren't alone, and that there were others out there like us and it was okay to be ourselves. I'll miss my Uncle Forry; I wanna go play at the Ackermansion again.

– Mike Mendez
Filmmaker



The 1993 FM Con poster by Frank Kelly Freas.

A Beacon of Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm. That's the first thing I learned from Forrest J Ackerman – a genre enthusiast a bit before my time (an icon of my father's monster kid generation), but someone I admired nonetheless because of his unwavering appreciation for the films I embraced.

There's a poster by Frank Kelly Freas from the 1993 *Famous Monsters of Filmland* convention I attended – which took place in Arlington, Virginia – that hangs in my office. It has followed me from high school to college and to Los Angeles. And it hangs like a beacon of enthusiasm, Forrest's face beaming from a crowd of cinema's most classic monsters. When I first touched down in Hollywood, visiting the famous Ackermansion was on the to-do list. Never mind finding a job. That would come later. Meeting the man who served as an inspiration for what I do today was top priority! No surprise, Forrest was gracious and hilarious.

His excitement for the genre cinema was so palpable and so infectious that it will endure through countless generations of monster lovers like me.

– Ryan Turek
Editor

I Never Saw the Ackermansion

I met Forry through Jim Warren, whom I'd known in Philadelphia. Jim seemed like a nice guy and he interviewed me there. That interview ran in, I think, issue 4. We got together in a hotel room with a lot of pictures and put it together. I didn't meet Forry for some time, though, not until he moved to New York City in fact! I saw Jim frequently. I remember Forry telling me that he saw a lot of movies as a kid; he and his mom and dad would sometimes see 3, 4 or even 5 movies in one day!

After that we didn't actually meet again until we saw each other at Kevin Clement's Horror-Thon at the William Carlos Williams Center in Rutherford, NJ, and then again in the early 90s in Crystal City for the Famous Monsters Convention. We saw each other on and off in New York. I remember having lunch with him and was amazed by the puns! We laughed all the time when we were together. Forry was a generous and funny guy.

I was happy to do a segment for *Hooray for Horrorwood*. Things were good between Forry and Mr. Ferry then. I was standing there talking about FM and Forry was hiding behind a lectern and he suddenly popped up and started punning at me. So we punned back and forth for a short while and then I think I howled and said, "Goodnight, whatever you are!"

I last saw Forry at the Monster Bash in Pennsylvania. I never

Artwork printed with the permission of the Estate of Frank Kelly Freas

did visit the Ackermansion and to this day, I'm sorry I never made the trip.

– Zacherley, the Cool Ghoul
Horror Host and DJ

Walking the Tightrope

More than once I've entered into conversations with like-minded fans of horror and fantasy film wherein we discuss why we like what we like, how we got interested in what we like and, perhaps most importantly, do we like what we like because of its intrinsic value or because of some aspect of the topic that leaves us feeling nostalgic? The last part of the question, I suppose, implies that there's something wrong with feeling nostalgic – which, of course, there isn't – provided one does not simply swim in sentimentality at the expense of living in the now.

As for myself, I tend to want to differentiate between the things that I like because they invoke pleasant memories – like trick-or-treating or watching films at the drive-in when I was a kid – and things that I like because they inspire or challenge or educate me. A good example of the latter would be David Pirie's classic book *A Heritage of Horror,* which initiated me into the wonders of enlightened film criticism through an intense examination of Great Britain's post-WWII horror films. I loved those films and related to them, and as such was open to a deeper reading of their meanings. As a fan, however, the best circumstance is when a point of interest represents not only a nostalgic touchstone but also genuine intellectual value. Forry Ackerman was and is, for me, just such a touchstone.

During his days at the helm of *Famous Monsters,* Forry himself walked a tightrope of sorts between childish enthusiasm and film scholarship. He was careful to maintain what some might call an entry-level approach to the magazine – so that young monster fans would instantly feel at home and have their innate enthusiasm for all things fantasy validated. But Forry didn't stop there. In spite of the mandate to skew to the younger crowd, he wasted no time making certain FM pushed them, however gently, towards a more intellectual or informed sensibility regarding the subject matter. That philosophy in some ways guaranteed he would ultimately lose readership as kids aged and hungered for something deeper and more substantial. To his credit, Forry stayed the course however, and his legacy is indisputable. The minds he was shaping between the late fifties and early eighties (and beyond) have had a profound effect on pop culture.

Of course, the preceding merely reflects Forry's contributions as represented by *Famous Monsters,* while in fact his influence was far more pervasive, being present as he was, at the birth of what is now much of modern fandom – at least fantasy film and science fiction lit fandom – and then again through his efforts to foster the exploding "monster kid" community for over forty years.

Like so many of my brethren, I'll forever be in Forry's debt for inviting me into a virtual clubhouse – a clubhouse I still visit frequently – wherein I feel safe, normal, inspired and, yes, nostalgic.

– Robert Tinnell
Filmmaker and Writer



Forry captured in a contemplative moment.

A Precarious Position

When I was 16 years old, I made my first trip out to LA from Connecticut to scout out film schools. My dad told me to use the time and money wisely (he *was* footing the bill!), so I did, visiting with any F/X makeup artist who would see me, and doing something I'd always dreamed of. . . I dropped in at the Ackermansion. This was shortly before the 2nd Famous Monstercon, and on the day I visited Forry in his lair he was already entertaining comic book maven Phil Seuling and his children as they discussed plans for the upcoming event in NYC.

Photo courtesy Forrest J Ackerman Trust

I thought I was intruding, but Forry asked me out to lunch with Phil and the kids, which was so very nice of him. I sat enthralled as Forry told Phil stories you didn't read about in *Famous Monsters,* like the local kid who'd ripped him off for years, making off with all kinds of treasure from the Ackerman collection. Later, the kid's parents invited Forry to their home to proudly show him what an avid "collector" their son had become under Forry's influence. "Mine, mine, and mine," Forry pointed again and again as several missing items were on display in the boy's bedroom. The story stuck in my mind ever after – here was this nice man allowing us all into his home to view these treasures and he was getting ripped off right and left, since this boy was apparently not an isolated case! Forry's lawyer advised him not to take any legal action, however, since it was not unusual in such cases for the accused to turn around and claim that inappropriate sexual behavior was the price of the "stolen" loot! Few FM readers realized what a precarious position generous men like Forry Ackerman could find themselves in.

Phil and his kids drove off from the little Mexican restaurant and Forry drove me to a nearby bus stop, so I had a little time alone with him. We discussed his friendship with Bela Lugosi, which included some amazing stories which haven't seen print, I'm sure. He was warm and friendly, never condescending, and I left with the impression he truly liked the young people which FM targeted as its primary market. This never changed as I met him in later years when I was a grownup working in the film industry and still attending various conventions to which Forry donated his attentions. Though he was fond of citing the *ten* heart attacks he suffered between his fortieth and fiftieth birthdays, Forry ultimately lived beyond age 90! I firmly believe this was because he was truly *happy* doing what he did for so many years – bringing the classic monsters of the golden age to us all.

– Norman Bryn
Make-Up Artist and Author

Throw the Mummy From the Train

It should come as no surprise that Forry Ackerman and his *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine inspired me as a kid to edit my own horror mag someday, which is exactly what happened shortly after I went to work for *Fangoria* in 1985. Before that, Forry had helped sell my first article to *Starlog* knockoff *Enterprise Incidents* and published several pieces of mine in his post-FM mag *Monsterland* in the early 80s. So, of course, I am indebted to the man both indirectly and directly for launching my career in genre journalism. The fact that we became friends was more than icing on the cake.

My favorite Forry anecdote occurred when he showed up in Fango's New York City headquarters, completely unannounced, in December 1987. My office was about 20 feet from the reception area, and when he made some kind of jokey stentorian pronouncement outside, I came running out to find Uncle Forry and his pal, oddball author/filmmaker Kenneth *(Hollywood Babylon)* Anger, standing at the front desk. What a wonderful surprise! He regaled my staff and me for a few hours, then I invited him later that evening to accompany me to a screening of the Billy Crystal Hitchcock parody *Throw Momma From the Train.* He ended the perfect day by signing my program, "Remember the night we saw *Throw the Mummy From the Train.*" It was priceless Forry and one of many reasons I will never forget him.

– Anthony Timpone
Editor Emeritus
FANGORIA

Monster Boy Heaven

Being the precocious Monster Boy that I was, as you can guess I was all over *Famous Monsters of Filmland* like, well – like Forry's infamous puns were all over its pages. I can say that



The Ackermonster meets the Edison Frankenstein monster – and the world shall tremble!

Photo courtesy Forrest J Ackerman Trust

thanks to the understanding parents that permitted it, I was an active part of the community of Horror genre fans before I was into my double-digit birthdays. It even went as far as having the knowledge to correct errant Universal Studios tour guides, thanks again largely to the lessons I learned on the pages of FM.

You could really get a sense of Forrest J Ackerman from the pages of his magazine. He was like a member of your extended family; the Uncle that smiled and winked because he understood you. You were the kid that was a bit different, that had the creative side, that was both speculative and introverted when it came to the worlds around you and darn it you *loved monsters!* They were your friends – sometimes your only friends – except that now you knew that Forry was your friend too. Like the Monsters, he would never let you down.

The first time I met "Uncle Forry" was on my seventh birthday. My parents had given me a choice between visiting Disneyland or visiting the Ackermansion, so of course being the rabid Monster Boy that I was, I chose the Ackermansion. To hedge their bets, and to be sure their son was happy on his birthday (despite what could possibly have been his own bad decision), they let me do *both* things. Wow! Disneyland and Grisleyland all in the same day! I was in Monster Boy heaven.

So, on the way out of the park, after I spent a goodly amount of time in the Main Street U.S.A. Nickelodeon of Disneyland (hey, they were showing Barrymore's silent version of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*), we hopped on Interstate 5 and made our way toward Hollywood and the Los Feliz exit. Before long, after winding up the hill, there it was, the final destination of many a Monster Addicted pilgrim – The Ackermansion! (Flash of Lightening! Roll of Thunder!)

Forry was exactly the doting Uncle you'd always wished he'd be, to the umpteenth power. After the cursory tour and letting me try Bela Lugosi's Dracula ring on my slender digit, we got down to the important business of talking Monsters. Forry even let me loose on his wall of filing cabinets filled with stills so that I could look at everything he had on Chaney's *Phantom of the Opera*, which was my favorite film at that time. He was like your favorite teacher, except he was the teacher that allowed, nay *insisted*, that you bring Monster magazines to class.

I learned a lot of important lessons from Forry that night, not just about films, but also about life. I knew that this tolerant and friendly man who invited strangers into his home, for conversation and to share his world with you for no better reason than the shared love of Monster Movies, had it right. Where most people would ridicule you for what you didn't know, he would patiently teach you, because he knew it enriched your life and made the Horror community stronger. He was just as fresh and excited that night about his love for Horror, Science-Fiction and Fantasy as I – a boy of only seven – was. And I'm still convinced that for him, the vast collection he'd amassed wasn't about greed or being a show-off, it was about sharing it with the world and letting them enjoy it too. These were the lessons I brought away from that first meeting with Forry on the last night of my seventh year. Those are also part of my personal creed, still in effect so many years later.

Looking around at today's world of fandom, I sadly realize that there are a lot of people who – if they ever learned those lessons, they must have now forgotten them. But I'll tell you what; you sure can tell the people who have learned those same lessons from Forry and *didn't* forget them. There is a kindness in those people that is instantly recognizable to a kindred soul; we all spring from the same tree and that tree wasn't planted by Johnny Appleseed, it was planted by Forrest J. Ackerman.

Before I left Forry's that night he shared another story at his door – *The House on Haunted Hill* was right up the street from him. My parents and I drove up to the house. I have – in my turn – driven many people up that hill over the years to share it with them. Thanks again to Forry, a man who is *still* giving to others, through myself and countless others with whom he shared his knowledge, and those people share it with others – that, my friends, is Forry's legacy. A life-force is energy and Forry's energy will never die, it has just turned into something else – us.

There would be many more trips up that hill to the Ackermansion over the years. Once I even filmed an episode of a television series I was writing and directing called *The Video Asylum*, this episode being a tour of Forry's house. I was delighted to catch some of those same "Forry Stories" I could remember him telling that first visit. He was still excited, even after telling those stories who knows how many times. There is something we can all learn and carry away with us from his example. Forget the scroll of Toth and the tana leaves, forget about mother lightning and feeding nightly on the blood of your unsuspecting prey; sharing is the true secret of eternal life.

Forrest J Ackerman will live forever. The lessons he taught are still shared today and if we allow ourselves, we realize that we are all Forrest J Ackerman's family.

Thank you Uncle Forry.

– Sid Terror
Editor-In-Chief
TheHorrorDrunx.com

Unexpected Acknowledgment

I grew up with *Famous Monsters*, or, more pointedly and accurately, *Famous Monsters* enabled me to never grow up. In any event, except for meeting Forry briefly for a handshake and autograph at the age of fourteen, I didn't visit his house

or have any kind of real conversation with him until I was nearly forty, and finally starting to make grown-up sense out of my own lifelong fascination with monsters. Since we had relatively little contact over the years – he was gracious and helpful with my research on a number of occasions – it was extremely touching that he asked that I be mentioned by name at his memorial. None of the countless, crazy letters, pictures or articles I sent him as a kid ever found their way into the magazine (thank goodness), so the unexpected acknowledgment was all the more moving and meaningful.

– David J. Skal
Author, *The Monster Show* and *Hollywood Gothic*

Under The Spell of the Ackermonster

I was a lonely, isolated twelve year old when I first stumbled upon *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine in 1958. Picking up that issue introduced me to a fabulous world filled with flying carpets, genies, misunderstood monsters and a kindly gentleman who, like the proverbial Pied Piper, would invite me and thousands of other children on a magical voyage through dreams and benevolent nightmares.

If Forry was an inspired Sorcerer, then I was his awestruck and willing Apprentice, transported to wonderful lands I never knew existed. He was, to Frankenstein's Monster, Dracula, the Wolf Man and the Mummy, what Walt Disney was to Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs. Santa Claus, it seems, dwelled not within the frozen kingdom of the North Pole. Rather, he lurked inside the confines of the Ackermansion, warmed by the mythic rays of Southern California. In Forry's world, for those of us fortunate enough to live 'neath his enduring spell, every day was Christmas. I was honored to call him my friend for forty-five years and, even though his gentle soul has departed this mortal plane, ascending softly on wings of angels, he will live on with Dorothy and Toto in the magical Land of Oz, as well as forever in my heart.

– Steve Vertlieb
Writer

Off The Leash

It was Bernie Wrightson who first said, "Yaknow, the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of the very first issue of FM is coming up, and somebody oughta do something, yaknow, because it's the fiftieth, yaknow!" So your humble narrator contacted some likely suspects, all of whom ultimately bailed on us for various lame reasons, leaving me, Bernie, and illustrator Woody Welch in Woody's apartment as midnight came and went on 27 February 2008, toasting the anniversary of the very first newsstand appearance of the magazine that virused us young.

Forry Ackerman often referenced the fact that he had no children with a codicil of irony – in truth, he had more offspring than any human being, ever. No mere teaspoon of spermatozoa could aspire to such far-ranging influence.

More irony: It was only within 24 hours of his death that I found out the no-period "J" in his name stood for James, same as my middle name. (No spurious chain-of-title should be inferred.) Other sources mysteriously cite his middle birth name as "Clark," so who knows?

The challenge, then, becomes finding something to say beyond the rank-and-file trample-down of FJA recollect, from enthusiastic and bereaved fans eager to queue up with chapter-and-verse diarizing – sometimes charming, sometimes post-literate, yet always sincere; all begging the question of the power of one person's influence.



David Schow and Forry.

Forry and the unanticipated subculture that sprang from *Famous Monsters* codified the existence of monster kids everywhere (unmet or no) by proclaiming that weird was okay – perhaps the single most important covenant I learned when *I* was still in single digits. It didn't matter if you grew up or lapsed from the fold. It was an underground community, hence, an invisible state whose members were unified by the common lifeline of a monster magazine they *all* read, once upon a time. Forry stood at the apex of this pyramid as royalty, the occupant of an idealized palace and Mecca he called the Ackermansion. To meet Forry himself in his headquarters was a rite of passage for many. If you could not manage this, Forry was still the prototypical Ultimate Fan, and the knowledge that he was out there, somewhere, surrounded by his treasures, had the power to bond total strangers through common pursuits. That era has ended now. We're all off the leash, growing older, and responsible for tending what memorial flames we care to cultivate ... but now without that constant heartbeat in the background, the glue that automatically bonded fans into a US of FJA.

In a way, a full-circle closure has been attained. I'm not talking about the careers, scholarships, rivalries and multimedia spawnage that can all trace bloodlines back to a monster

Photo courtesy of David Schow.

magazine. I'm talking about the ability we have today to watch many of the earliest silent films Forry so venerated in the pages of FM, back when they were completely unattainable to the likes of us. When some of those Lon Chaney classics turned up on TCM, I thought, that's it – the wheel has finally done a full revolve. Even *Metropolis* is now restored beyond what we ever thought feasible.

I have very few current friends of like interests who *didn't* start their paths with a copy of FM clutched in one hand. And if you had walked up to the ten-year-old version of myself and announced the height and breadth Forry's empire would attain, I would have thought you were describing Paradise.

It extends from the bottom of our hearts to the stars, and beyond.

– David Schow
Writer

With Ardent Affection

The very first time I met Forry was way back in November 1975 at the Famous Monsters of Filmland Convention in New York City. I was given a bodyguard/guide called Jerry Arden; flattering but a bit inhibiting. Jerry was guiding me through the hotel on the morning after I arrived when this tall, interestingly dressed man threw himself down on one knee in front of me and pledged undying love and declared he wanted to marry me. I gave him a weak smile and tried to walk around him but he wouldn't let me pass. I didn't want to make a scene so I painted on a smile and broke the news that I had married Tonio only a few weeks before. The man claimed he was devastated and would wait for me forever. Jerry came to the rescue.

"How's the wife, Forry?" he asked.

The man climbed to his feet and gave me a broad smile. "Well, it was worth a try," he said.

Jerry introduced him as Forry Ackerman. It still didn't press any buttons but Jerry made a date with him for lunch so I guessed it was all right.

Forry's house in the Lincoln Park area of LA was known as the Ackermansion and was a magnet for all fans of Science Fiction or Horror. Forry had somehow managed to inveigle his way into more than 50 films and had taken home souvenirs from most of them. Friends and grateful fans had donated others. There was hardly an inch of space in the whole house that didn't tell a story, and Forry was there to tell 'em!

I was invited to visit the Ackermansion when I was in Los Angles in 1997 for the Festival to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the publication of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Forry picked me up from the hotel and took me to his home. On the way we picked up another Horror icon; Robert Quarry. Bob was America's answer to Christopher Lee. Forry was still declaring undying love and promising to marry me but the fun had gone out of it a little. His wife Wendayne was ill and Forry was obviously worried about her. But he gallantly did the tour for me and at the end did me the honour of asking, not for my hand in marriage but for my signature on the flyleaf of his first addition of the Stoker masterpiece. I really felt privileged to be among such giants of the Horror scene as Bela Lugosi, John Carradine, Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Bob Quarry, Elsa Lancaster and many others.

I suppose it was a bit childish carrying on the 'courtship' performance for so many years but we both enjoyed it. I'll miss him next time I go to America. The last time I saw him was at a convention in Baltimore. Approaching his nineties he had all the enthusiasm and chutzpah that he had all those years ago in New York. He gave me a copy of his book, *Forrest Ackerman's World of Science Fiction;* on the flyleaf he wrote, in various coloured inks,

For Ingrid the Rapturous

Captor of the Heart of your Eternal Fan and Friend

With Ardent Affection

Forry

You can't have it better than that!

– Ingrid Pitt
Actress and Writer

I Can't Remember When I First Met Forry

Forry was always smiling, in so many ways eager to give us things we never had. Let me count the ways..

First, he made us take "light" entertainment seriously. Movies of monsters, aliens and robots were brushed aside by everyone else, but Forry let us see that such entertainment can have value and is worth exploration.

Second, he introduced us to people who create the strange creatures that make us gasp and scream in movies.

Third, he showed us how movie magic is made – behind the scenes of filmmaking, makeup, costumes, special effects.

And he did all this with a perpetual sense of fun – letting us know that there was a grown man, a professional magazine editor, grinning with as much pleasure as we were.

I can't remember where I first met Forry. Of course I knew who he was long before we shook hands face to face. Like all geeks, *Famous Monsters* had been part of my growing up – my formation, my education, my entry into the wondrous

world of science fiction, horror, fantasy and superheroes.

It was Forry's magazines that laid the foundation for magazines I created with my partner Norm Jacobs – *Starlog, Fangoria, Cinemagic, Future Life* and *Comics Scene*. In our publications we expanded making invisible filmmakers visible heroes, delving into details of filmmaking and encouraging youngsters who dream of making their own amazing movies.

Forry and I used to bump into each other at fan cons, and we kept in touch via letters (before the days of emails and texting), many of which I saved. In 1984, as he was leaving for Spain to attend an 8-day fantasy film festival, he wrote, "...hopefully visiting Jules Verne's tomb and Mary Shelley's gravesite and numerous similar homages (Haggard, Stoker, Karloff *et al*) in England."

In January 1985 he wrote, "Apparently you and Heinlein and Ayn Rand know something I don't. Heinlein has said 'Altruism is the worst form of self-deceit and the root of all evil.' Hope you can explain it to me someday before I do too much more damage to myself and to the world."

I replied "I doubt you are in danger of doing damage to yourself or to the world. Whether you know it or not, I believe your actions in life are rationally selfish."

The man was always on the move, always obsessed with the magical world of monster movies, always smiling and ready to lay one of his jokes on me. "Kerry, have you heard about the new McDonald's they just opened on the Moon?" No, Forry, I haven't. "Well, it's quite nice – they have the same menu as here on Earth, but there's no atmosphere."

I visited Forry at the famous Ackermansion on Glendower Avenue – an amazing experience. The rooms of his home were a crowded museum of memorabilia with none of the usual furniture. He shared personal tales about the items that fired my curiosity – incredible original illustrations, books and magazines, posters and props, costumes and photos from all the great movies he loved.



Russell Maynor, Forry and Kerry O'Quinn.

When I moved from NYC to Hollywood in 2001, I attended his 85th birthday party at The Friars Club in Beverly Hills. Soon after, he had to sell most of his collection and went to a much smaller house not far from my apartment. Though it was no mansion, it was jam-packed with fascinating stuff – including Maria, the giant robot from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, one of his favorite vintage films. And he still welcomed fans who found him at the new Acker-minimansion.

In late 2008 I visited Forry for the last time. He was lying in bed with life-support surrounding him. Maria loomed over him, guarding her human companion as she had for years. He saw me, and even with tubes in him from all directions, he blossomed with that big, genuine Forry smile. I could hardly keep from crying, but he immediately made me smile.

"Kerry, have you heard that Kraft has opened a chain of food stores in Israel?" No, I haven't, Forry – tell me. "It's quite wonderful," he said with a twinkle, "and they're calling it Cheeses of Nazareth."

At his last birthday party I delivered a framed photo portrait of him in Dracula's cape and ring, taken by my friend Russell Maynor. I have a picture of me presenting it to Forry – with Ray Bradbury (his lifetime friend) and my friend Tom DeSanto (produced first two *X-Men* and *TransFormers* movies). It was a gala affair, as all times with Forry were, and he signed my print of that photo with "BEAST WITCHES!"

He now hangs on my wall with other great friends from the science fiction universe – including Isaac Asimov, Nichelle Nichols, J.J. Abrams and Sir Arthur C. Clarke. Forever in good company, Forry will always grin at me with his trademark smile.

– Kerry O'Quinn
Editor

One of a Kind

When I picked up my first copy of *Famous Monsters* (issue #24 - Forry's personal favorite) it literally changed my life. Within moments of cracking the cover I forgot all about hot rods, surf music and Davy Crockett. I was immediately immersed in the world of classic monster movies and I never came back.

Forry's command of the magazine itself made him just as much a celebrity as the actors and creatures he tirelessly promoted in its pages. Forry was not just another fan with the world's greatest job, he was a star in his own right. How many magazine editors outside of Hefner were as recognizable? He was also very Hitchcockian in his ability to pop up in the movies and on TV. He lived the life every kid dreamed of.

Photo courtesy of Kerry O'Quinn.

He represented an entire generation of monster-loving kids and shared his fabulous memorabilia collection with the world. I honestly don't think I would be who I am today had it not been for 4SJ. It was my pleasure to meet him and on a few occasions direct him in my own films. I don't think anyone ever has or will compare to Forry. He was certainly a one of a kind Famous Monster of Filmland.

– Fred Olen Ray
Producer and Director

A Photographer's Dream

As a 10-year-old kid in Texas, I would hop on my bike and wait for the magazine truck to arrive at the local grocery store so I could grab the latest issue of *Famous Monsters Of Filmland*. I had won "honorable mention" in an FM contest and had my photo, of me as a vampire, published. The magazine had inspired me to create makeup and animated films, and if my monthly newsstand mission made me late for dinner – so what?

On a family trip to LA I found a local phone book and called Mr. Ackerman. He answered the phone and generously invited my family to visit his Ackermansion. We wandered his hallowed halls in amazement, while he typed away for his magazine, undisturbed by our presence.

That visit – seeing rockets and dinosaurs and star-men with my own wide eyes, confirmed to me that I never *really* had to grow up!

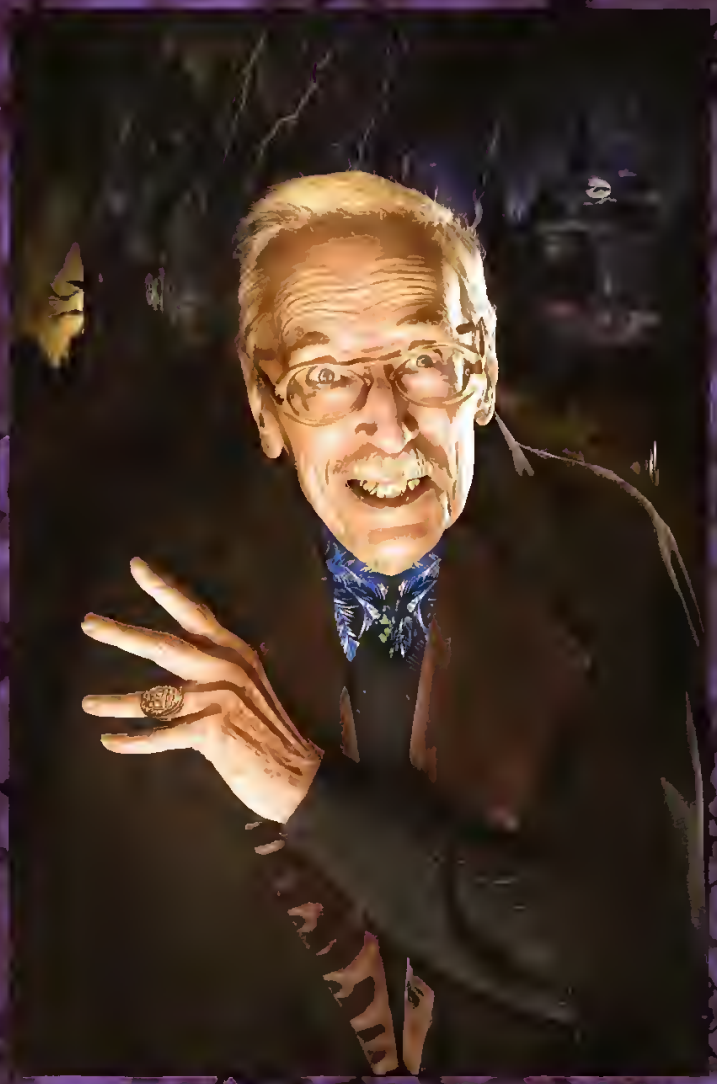
I became a professional photographer and filmmaker. Along the way I became friends with Kerry O'Quinn. We were both big Forry Fans, and whenever I visited him in Hollywood, we went to see Forry. I wanted to arrange a portrait session of him amid his treasures of movie magic, where he held court with the friends and fans he freely welcomed into his amazing, private world.

It was a photographer's dream.

A man of such accomplishments, such character and wit and renown – he had an eternal glint in his eyes and was ever ready for the next adventure – so he quickly agreed to the portrait session. What should he wear? What else but the royal raiments of the great Lugosi – the infamous cape and ring of Count Dracula?

My assistant and I set up lights while Forry, ill and battle-worn, entertained us with puns and jokes. With the help of his loyal friends and helpers, he stood without his walker, the royal cape thrown over his pajamas and Hawaiian shirt. He became Jester and King all at once.

I told him the expression I wanted, and he knew exactly what to do. Forry was – in addition to his skills as a writer, editor, agent, promoter and collector – a ham actor, having made dozens of cameo appearances in movies and music videos. A few clicks and we were done.



Russell Maynor's 2007 portrait of Forry (also seen on our inside front cover).

I've never seen a man so close to death and so very alive at the same time. I believe this portrait captures what a big kid he was.

Here's to the AckerMonster!

– Russell Maynor
Photographer and Filmmaker

Magical Discoveries

It was Uncle Forry who let me know I wasn't alone.

All those Saturday afternoons in front of the television: monster movies and science fiction shoestring epics that filled my grey matter with pulp and dark imaginings that linger to this day – so far as I knew, I was alone in my love of Karloffian mayhem and the musings of Ray Bradbury in grammar school.

Photo credit: Russell Maynor

But then, the magical discovery of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, in a little mini-mall in the mythical burg of El Cajon, California; Vale Liquor, right next door to the Speedee Mart (which would eventually become 7/11: oh, thank heaven), Doc Vale was the only guy in town to stock what would become my favorite magazine when I was ten years old.

This colorful man who imagined himself the spitting image of Vincent Price, who reveled in bad puns, arcane monster ephemera and eye-blasting cover art by Basil Gogos, actually made a magazine for *me!*

In junior high (okay, we call it middle school now) I created a little mimeographed magazine of my own called *Coffin Capers*, an inept 12-year-old's personal FM; my first publication, even if I published it myself. The ditto sheets that printed it were as purple as the prose and just continued my lifelong fascination of all that Forry had introduced me to.

He was an enthusiastic scholar of all things that a pubescent kid would adore, and guided me through my parents' divorce at a time when I really needed the uncle I had never met.

Eventually we did meet – even got to know one another. When I was doing publicity at Avco Embassy for John Carpenter's *The Fog*, I got them to hold a press conference at the Ackermansion and got the grand tour. I'd know the phone number for most of my life (MOONFAN), and to spend time within the walls was a phenomenal experience.

Forry was a character, with a loopy, lyrical manner of speech that floated up and down a stairwell of pitch, from baritone to falsetto in a single "ye-s-s-s-s, uh-huh-h-h-h." He was always smiling, even in his wheelchair and under the oxygen mask. Seemingly always happy, engaged and exuberant, he was a remarkable, one-of-a-kind character who never lost his joy in the world of imagination.

His memorial service was every bit as remarkable as the Great Man himself. When the giant screen at the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood filled with a video close-up of his face, speaking to us from the beyond on a recording he had made shortly before his death, there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Everyone I know in the world of horror and fantasy – writers, filmmakers, makeup effects technicians, artists – were influenced by him and his magazine. There was no one like him, and there will never be another Uncle Forry. I miss him… but he lives on: in the old issues of the original magazine, in movies like *The Time Travelers* and *Thriller*, in photos we had taken together, but mostly in the magical memories that are stamped indelibly on this monster kid's festering brain.

– Mick Garris
Writer, Producer, Director

One of Us

Like most of you reading this, I first met Forrest J Ackerman in the pulpy pages of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine. In proud and somewhat overawed possession of issues # 59 *and* 60 – seconds after seeing them nestled together on a South Indianapolis mag rack – I couldn't have been any more than eight years old when I discovered within their pages one of the great esoteric secrets of the late Sixties: there was an entire neo-human race of nestling monsters of which I was but a single (if bratty and contumacious) fragment. Ostensibly a monthly devoted to minute chronicling of the horror films just then clogging theatres and smeared over late-nite TV, FM was also a jolly serial covert narrative on the truly monstrous American scene of its era; a kind of *Fear & Loathing on the Late, Late Show*, where pics of twisted and agonized figures (human and non-; Forry was nothing if not ecumenical) and antic punny text was read by many an American tot as oblique



Forry as Ronfield! The Frank Kelly Freas painting from the cover of FM #200.

Artwork printed with the permission of the Estate of Frank Kelly Freas.

satire on the world outside the magic frame of gods and ghouls.

This was secondary to Forry's invention of the self-aware, self-identified culture of horror movie fandom. Every sad-eyed Goth baby or thug in a retro-Freddy tee you see are metaphorical great-grandchildren of New Frontier-era pimple-squeezers who grooved to FM in study hall and Forry's pioneering monster-rally conventions placed second only to the avuncular chatty prose style as community building. Over the course of dozens more issues, I came to know the manically grinning fellow in the pencil-thin moustache in the inky pics as a cheerfully balmy, congenially decent fellow who detested drug use with the same patriotic fervor as he idolized women with giant breasts. The letters pages and fan contributions reinforced the idea of belonging to an absurd granfalloon, just as shots of fans posing with Forry visually linked us to oft-run images of the editor alongside Bela and Boris lent a sense of (suitably mutated) bloodline. One got the idea Forry loved every misguided and misbehaving one of us, the larval hippies and proto punks. When FM folded in 1983, having become a giddy young adult immersed sternum deep in early Eighties party culture, I was still ordering my life around the Saturday night horror movie. The hook had sunk irretrievably deep.

Fade in twenty years later and the horror-movie mag is enjoying a brief revival as part of the decade-long 'zine movement. Forry's kids were making movies and magazines of their own, so the horror movie convention was enjoying resurgence and this was where I finally met Forry Ackerman in the much-puckered flesh. He was having the time of his life helming a resurgent FM and being made much of by aging boomers and Goth babies lusting to touch the scarab ring he wore, once property of Bela Lugosi. His maniacal satyr's leer on such occasions was one of those down-the-rabbit-hole moments you get as a journalist, on par with getting drunk with Russ Meyer, riling Jimmy Carter, and swapping absurdities with Edward Albee and Bootsy Collins – the shocking, delightfully human fact that public image and private individual are very often the same.

Take my word for it – Forry was as mad as you think *you* are, badass. The next time you think the world lacks wonderment, reflect on that priceless corner of Weirdness this Angel of the Odd carved out inside your skull.

One of us. Gooble-gobble.

– Ron Garmon
Writer

His Gentlemanly Ways

Laura Freas reminisced with us over the phone: "When my late husband, Frank Kelly Freas, was doing artwork for Forry, he was delighted by the job and the opportunity to spend some time with him. Forry shall always be remembered by me for his gentlemanly ways and especially how kind and friendly he was toward my husband. I was touched when, after the funeral, Forry went up to Kelly's casket, put his hand on it and said, 'Goodbye old friend.' Even after death Forry was good to him; such generosity of spirit. I'll never forget that. Never."

Later on, Laura also recalled one of Kelly's favorite anecdotes: "When Kelly was putting together the second volume of his collected works, *Frank Kelly Freas: A Separate Star,* he was asking known collectors if they had any of his paintings, so he could get scans for the book. Forry said: 'No, no, I don't have any of yours, Kelly.' However, some time later in a science fiction video, Forry is narrating as he ascends the stairs of the Ackermansion. Imagine Kelly's surprise to see, on the wall behind Forry, several of his own paintings hanging there! Even then the collection was so large that Forry had trouble keeping track of it."

– Laura Brodian Freas
Trustee, Frank Kelly Freas Estate

Pay It Forward

A few years ago I was privileged to have my artwork displayed at a gallery show in Burbank. Among the notable luminaries in attendance was an elderly gentleman in a striking blue suit and mischievous gleam in his eye. Those who didn't already know him were quick to ask the identity of this intriguing fellow.

It was, of course, Forrest J Ackerman. Alongside our mutual friend Terry Pace, he slowly strolled the exhibit, taking in each painting with the smile of a man revisiting old friends. It didn't occur to me until much later how significant this moment was in the great canvas of my life. I realized that this event, and my entire professional career, would not likely be what it is if it were not for the endeavors of dear Uncle Forry.



Frank Dietz, Forry and Terry Pace.

Photo courtesy Jessie Lilley

For this child of the sixties, Forry was the great educator in the ways of monsterdom, the troop master of the treasures I sought to discover. He told us it was okay to like what we liked, and thus to be who we were, and that we were not alone.

If I were to sum up Forrest J Ackerman in one word, it would be "joy." The joy he found in life, and the joy he then passed along to leagues of genre fans, is his true legacy. Since his passing, it has become our responsibility to pay that joy forward, and do for the Monster Kids of tomorrow what Uncle Forry did for us yesterday. I promise you he'll be watching...

– Frank Dietz
Artist

Nobody is Badder or Balder Than Reggie Nalder

One of the great pleasures in knowing Forry Ackerman was watching him watch movies and I was fortunate to be in a position to watch several classic and not-so-classic films with him during the years I lived in Los Angeles. A couple of screenings in particular stand out as I look back now and both of them involve the character actor Reggie Nalder. Reggie had the kind of face that you simply never forgot and Forry had always admired him since seeing Reggie in Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much* back in 1956.

Now, my involvement with Reggie was a bit more personal than just being his fan. I was also for a time his agent as well and had recently got him one of his larger roles in a film known stateside as *Dracula's Dog* and in Europe *Zoltan, Hound of Dracula*. The distributor for the film was a company on Wilshire Boulevard known as Crown International and they had very kindly arranged a private screening for *Dracula's Dog* for the director Albert Band and Reggie along with some invited guests of them both. I asked if I could invite the editor of *Famous Monsters,* which of course, resulted in an instant "yes."



Forry, Reggie Nalder and David DelValle.

We arrived at Crown International at the ungodly hour of ten in the morning; not the best time to watch a horror film, at least, not in my book. Forry arrived right on the dot with an armful of the new issue of FM which he made available to one and all. As pleasantries were exchanged we then sat back to watch the latest and perhaps silliest excursion into the Dracula myth yet... Reggie is by nature a very shy individual not given to vanity, at least when it came to watching himself on the big screen.

Dracula's Dog is, as you can imagine, a grade Z horror film made for the consumption of die-hard horror fans who must see every film with the word Dracula in it. This one with a prologue set in the past was no exception. The screening was going along with everyone, especially Forry, having a good time until the scene where Dracula's dog vampirizes a couple of puppies belonging to the current living descendant of Dracula who happens to be on a camping trip with his wife and two kids... you can see where this is going... by the time the heartbroken kids bury their cute little pets in the ground in cigar boxes, night is about to fall and as this is playing out I lean over to Reggie and say, "I hope this is not going where I think it is going." Well of course the full moon brings out the vampire even in cute dead puppies and they begin to rise from their cigar box coffins and claw their way out, now Puppies of Dracula – this moment was so out there that I began to laugh, never thinking just how this affected poor Reggie, who by then was ready to slip out the back door.

When the film finally ended and the house lights went up I could see just how embarrassed Reggie was, being in such a silly film, even though as always he was the best thing in it. Before anyone had a chance to say anything, including the director of the film, Forry stood up and said, "Well, I don't know if I believe Dracula ever had a dog but I can tell you this. I for one believe in Reggie Nalder, and anytime he appears in a film then that film is all the better for it."

Those few words from Forrest J Ackerman, Editor-in-Chief of *Famous Monsters of Filmland,* made a shy European film actor feel ten feet tall, perhaps for the first time in a long while. Forry was the champion for these actors, and the list of the ones he helped into the limelight they might never have attained includes Florence Marley, Ann Robinson, Angus Scrimm, Carol Borland and Robert Clarke, to name a scant few. Forrest J Ackerman was their champion, and indeed, the most famous monster of them all.

– David DelValle
Writer

Photo courtesy of David DelValle.

The Avatar of a Renaissance

I'm glad to see *Famous Monsters* back in print under new ownership. Of course there's no way the magazine can replicate the impact it had way back in 1958 when it was literally the avatar of a renaissance in film scholarship under the guise of a pun-filled, kid-friendly monster magazine. Forry Ackerman delighted in spreading the word about the movies he loved and the world was the better for it. A whole tribe of baby boomers were taught that movies were important and fantasy/horror/science fiction no less than the mainstream kind. Hopefully this new incarnation can continue to preach the gospel of movie appreciation to enrapture another generation of fans as mine was by Forry Ackerman and James Warren's trend-setting original.

– Joe Dante
Filmmaker

The Seed Was Planted

Sometime in 1962, during a visit to Carl's Candy Shop on Grand River in Detroit, a new planet swam into my ken. For a fan of monster movies in the early sixties, discovering *Famous Monsters of Filmland* was like discovering a portal into a strange new world and Forry Ackerman was the keeper of the keys.

His knowledge of the fantastic was encyclopedic, but it was his personality – ebullient, corny, humorous, un-threatening and larger than life – that pervaded the magazine and made it unique amongst its many imitators. *"Maitre!"* I would've cried, if I'd had the French to say such a thing. Two years later my family was transferred to Europe and with me went a few precious issues of FM, which I proceeded to read to tatters over the next few years. What was left of the last ragged survivor finally sacrificed itself to make a campfire in a forest outside of Geneva in 1966. But the seed was planted. Even without new issues of *Famous Monsters* to sustain me, that early love of horror, mystery and science fiction never left me.

Years passed. Carl's Candy Shop became a package liquor store, with candy of a different sort available in the alley behind the building; and *Famous Monsters* became a fond memory. Then, sometime in 1995 I think, the comedian Gilbert Gottfried invited me to a private audience with Forry Ackerman at the Ackermansion. There he was, unchanged from my memory, exactly as I imagined him, except for certain extra-curricular interests that I would never have dreamed of in 1962. It was the first of many visits. My daughter – an avowed monster kid who loved pouring over my re-collected issues of *Famous Monsters* – met him several times, a point of pride for her now – and for me.

Thanks, Forry. Two generations of Armstrongs (at least) will never forget you.

– Curtis Armstrong
Actor



Never one to shy away from new ideas, for a brief time Forry explored interspecies romance. Until her husband threatened to destroy the Earth.

It Might Have Been Completely Different

Have you ever reflected back on your life and thought, "It all might've gone entirely differently if I had never met one particular person, who changed everything"? For me, that person was Forrest J Ackerman.

When I was a freshman at San Diego State University, my boyfriend at the time got me hooked on *Vampirella* comic books. He slyly suggested that I should dress up as Vampi for 1974's Comic-Con Masquerade contest. Promptly, I cut up a red leotard, found some double-sided tape and rescued a black cape from a vintage store.

That amazing night, I strode on stage, whipped off my cape, and paraded in my skimpy, homemade Vampirella costume for thousands of hootin' and hollerin' fanboys. It was the first time I'd ever had the nerve to do anything so bold – and "being Vampi" changed the course of my life. Although I persevered in college and grad school as a research scientist,

Photo courtesy Forrest J Ackerman Trust



Brinke Stevens and Forry ham it up recreating the roles of Luna and Count Mora from MARK OF THE VAMPIRE.

an exciting new creature had awakened that night under my mousy exterior.

I won first place in the Masquerade contest – and I was thrilled to meet Vampirella's creator for the first time at that show and a 35-year-long friendship with Forry Ackerman was forged. On many weekends, I'd drive up from San Diego to the fabulous Ackermansion, simply to hang out and have lunch with Forry and his gracious wife Wendayne. I soon came to think of them as my godparents.

One fateful day in 1980, a visiting filmmaker saw my photograph as Vampi tacked up on Forry's wall – as a result, I was hired for my very first movie role in *Zyzak Is King*. Many more film roles quickly followed; but it was Forry who truly launched my show biz career, not only by helping me to get discovered but also by being so supportive over the decades.

In March of 2009, the lavish old Egyptian Theater on Hollywood Boulevard was packed with over 600 folks who came to pay their respects to the late Forrest J Ackerman. Along with veteran author Ray Bradbury, several famous Monster Kids got up to speak: Guillermo del Toro, Rick Baker, John Landis and Joe Dante to name a scant few. We all laughed at times and most of us were crying by the end.

The same message was repeated in all the speeches: how we all felt isolated and different as kids – not fitting in. Forry was like our favorite weird Uncle who made it all okay – who made us realize that there were other kids just like us. Jovanka Vuckovic, then editor of *Rue Morgue* magazine, had flown in from Toronto, Canada, to speak. With her flaming orange hair and full-body tattoos, she said, "I'm a Monster grand-kid, and I will keep his memory alive too."

He was a great man, in that he touched so many people. There was nobody else like Forry.

– Brinke Stevens
Actress and Writer

Uncle Bob and Uncle Forry

It's thanks to my Uncle Bob that I met Uncle Forry.

I was born and raised back East, just outside of D.C., but three months of every year growing up, we lived and visited with my Dad's family out west. Arizona, Texas, New Mexico – and when in California, we stayed with my Aunt Debbie and Uncle Bob.

Now Uncle Bob, who had a construction business and didn't have kids of his own yet, somehow took a liking to me, and better yet, gleaned early on that I liked things like monster movies and model kits and Don Post masks. He used to take an occasional day off (he was his own boss) to whisk me away in his car and show me the Hollywood sites. These day trips were an absolute joy for me. Uncle Bob loved playing tour guide, and took me to movie studios, famous locations and Disneyland. If they were lucky, other family members, like Mom or Dad or his sister, my Aunt Debbie, were invited along, too. But usually it was just Uncle Bob and me.

He found out I liked magic, and so he took me often to Bert Wheeler's shop on Hollywood Boulevard where he bought me my first real, professional tricks. He knew I liked horror movies and delighted in taking me to L.A. locations, like the house where the Vincent Price film *House on Haunted Hill* was filmed. (Little did I know at the time that the Ennis House, the house used for the exteriors, was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, and that was Uncle Bob's real interest – architecture.)

One day, on one of these wonderful day trips, Uncle Bob told me we were going to a really fun place, something called the Mackersion, or something. I didn't quite understand what he was saying. But he kept going on about all the cool things that were in this man's house, this man whose name was Forrest J Ackerman, and that his mansion was like a museum, just jammed packed with props and books and all kinds of wonderful things from films I knew – and many films I had

Photo courtesy Forrest J Ackerman Trust

yet to see.

We pulled up to this house and, even at that moment to my young eyes, I didn't recognize it as any kind of "mansion." Uncle Bob led the way inside, and we were greeted by a smiling, happy man that for a moment I thought was Vincent Price. This man turned out to be Forry Ackerman. I remember shaking his hand; I remember he and my Uncle pointing things out to me and telling me what films they were from (and many of these films I hadn't seen yet – but everything interested me!). There were other people there, and I can't remember how long we visited. An hour? Three hours? During that visit I never did figure out what Mr. Ackerman actually did, and wondered if he was an actual blood relative of Uncle Bob's, but I was too embarrassed to ask. I mean, I was meeting new family members with every trip out west, and sometimes I was confused as to who was who… but I had a great revelation that day.

If a big person, an adult, could collect and love these things that I did, it was really okay. A license to love the genre and collect and make films and write and draw and – by comparison, my nascent collection, mostly a few Aurora model kits, some comic books and monster masks, could fit on one of Forry's book shelves. A few days later Uncle Bob gave me my first copy of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine.

Later I learned that this man we visited, Forrest J Ackerman, wasn't a relative. He made that magazine. But a larger, extended "family" was opened to me that day, and that feeling grew as I poured repeatedly over the pages of my first copy of *Famous Monsters*, and I felt welcomed and that I belonged.

I grew older (but not necessarily up, thank God) and regret that I never saw Forry Ackerman again. That was the first and only time. But it happened, luckily for me, at the right time, and I'll be forever grateful that my Uncle Bob introduced me to Uncle Forry, and to a world that I love very much, to this day.



Forry with the stars of the 1976 DeLaurentiis version of KING KONG, Charles Grodin and Jessica Lange.

Photo courtesy Forrest J Ackerman Trust

– Mark Redfield
Filmmaker, Writer, Actor

So Many Years Ago

It was rather poignant t have had my 100th birthday celebrated at the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood, where, earlier the same year, I attended the magnificent memorial gala for Forrest Ackerman. Without all the work Forry did to keep alive interest in the old Universal films, it's unlikely I would still be receiving attention for my small roles in *Phantom of the Opera* and *Dracula* so many years ago! I became quite fond of Forry, and miss him greatly.

– Carla Laemmle
Actress and Dancer

If I Close My Eyes

I first met Forrest J Ackerman during the spring of 1984 – although I certainly knew of him decades earlier through the pages of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. I found him to be not only generous with his time, but also a warm, friendly and gentle spirit. In short: he was everything I always hoped he would be.

After I finally made the move from New England to Southern California in 1988, Forry and I became friends. Initially, that friendship was defined by occasional lunches at Sizzler, The House of Pies or with his wife, Wendayne, at Michael's Restaurant. After Wendy's death, Forry would occasionally spend Christmas day with me and my mom (that is, until he invited her to go with him to a nudist colony – but that's another story).

When I became a television executive and producer in the 1990s, Forry was incredibly supportive of me. He donned a butler costume for a series of TV spots promoting the sitcom *Mr. Belvedere*. He touted the return of *Alien Nation* as a series of highly successful TV movies I was producing. He also was a frequent contributor to the many documentaries I was producing for A&E, History, AMC and of course, the Sci-Fi (now SyFy) Channel.

But it was during his many legal battles concerning *Famous Monsters* that my friendship with Forry deepened. Frequently I was called upon to be his sounding board, his mediator, his advocate. I testified on his behalf in court and helped him financially when he needed it. I was always proud to do it – because it was the least I could do for a man who had given so much of himself to so many other aspiring makers of

"Imagimovies."

After he moved to the "Acker-Mini-Mansion," I confess I didn't get to see as much of Forry as I would have liked. His health was often frail and it became harder and harder to schedule time with him. Nevertheless, I knew Forry was in good hands with Joe Moe and his caregiver, Dolly. I also knew that he was constantly surrounded by fans, friends and other well wishers. When we did get together – however briefly – I was always greeted by that big, wide-eyed grin that met me some 25 years earlier. I knew he was always there for me; he knew I was always there for him.

In the weeks before his death, I was informed of Forry's desire to have me serve as Trustee and Executor of his estate. I was deeply honored. In this capacity, I spent several hours with Forry in an effort to secure from him his final wishes and blessings. Although it was not a pleasant task for me, I was heartened by Forry's still-optimistic spirit. He never complained to me of pain or unhappiness. He never spoke harshly of even his harshest critics. Instead, he recited poetry (from his incredible memory), sang Al Jolson songs and talked of his beloved Wendayne.

Within a few months, the job of settling Forry's estate will be completed. All of his treasured collections, papers, photos and possessions will have been disbursed to the rightful parties. My promise to him will be fulfilled.

But it is even more gratifying that – as he used to proclaim in the pages of *Famous Monsters* – Forrest J Ackerman SHALL NOT DIE!! He will live on in the pages of the new *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. Like a spider, he will capture the imaginations of countless more young and creative minds in an internet-based web. He'll peer at us from model kits, t-shirts and other items of Captain Company-inspired merchandise.

As was said of actor Lon Chaney in the 1920s – "Hey! Don't step on that spider! It might be FJA!"

You know? If I close my eyes, I can still see his big, wide-eyed grin. What more could anyone ask for?

– Kevin Burns
Filmmaker

A Remarkable Legacy

The first time I met Forry, I went by myself and I was absolutely overwhelmed by him and by his collection. I had never seen anything like it in my entire life and, not being a collector myself, it was a double exposure to the amazing world he lived in. The next time I went, I took my children and it was like turning kids loose in a candy shop. They were just as amazed and overwhelmed as I had been. And he, of course, was so wonderful with kids and he was marvelous to my children. There was a photograph, a hundred years ago, of myself and Forry and my kids in *Famous Monsters*. I can't remember the issue number, but it was a fun thing for my boys to see themselves in a magazine. It was a lovely, lovely warm and loving visit with Forry, and my kids remember it very fondly.

Forry always put a lovely thing in *Variety* commemorating my father's birthday, and he continued to do that for years and years. I will say each of the families, meaning the Chaney and Lugosi families and certainly my family, owe Forry a debt we could never begin to repay; for what he did for the genre in its entirety and for our families in particular, as far as introducing several generations to not only the genre through his magazine, but to our family members in particular. Youngsters coming up became familiar with the films. They probably would not have otherwise. He also introduced the young people to the actors behind the roles and in a very respectful and dignified manner. Forry gave the actors as well as the directors and crew their due, which they were no longer getting; if they ever had gotten it!

People like Jack Pierce, James Whale, the people that my father worked with and also the Chaneys and Lugosi had worked with – he brought them all to life again for subsequent generations to learn about. Without Forrest J Ackerman, following generations would never have known about the actors and the people whose lives were dedicated to the film industry and to this genre in particular. Some of the filmmakers working today grew up on Forry's work and words, and it carries on for generation after generation.

He left a remarkable legacy for many generations and he was adored, just adored, by his fans. He created his own iconic following, and deservedly so.

– Sara Karloff

Imagine a World Without Monsters?

by Joe Moe

It was 1910 when Edison Studio's *Frankenstein*, considered by many the very first monster movie, appeared on the "shivery" screen. More than a hundred years later, why should we even know that? And if the horror genre is "obscure," why doesn't the general public respond, "Dracula who?" Or, "Franken-what?" at the mention of our Universal classic horror movies? To me the answer is obvious. We remember movie monsters of yesterday because a handful of passionate believers insisted on keeping these timeless stories, compelling characters and iconic images in the public eye. Chief among these true believers was our own Forrest J Ackerman; a tireless promoter of the genre that today marks Halloween as the second most popular holiday in America (if Halloween included gift giving, it might give X-mas a run for its money)! I've read that, of the hundreds of symphony orchestras across this country, in future decades there will only be a handful left. Why? Because

the symphony audience is aging and dying off. Sadly, they're not being replaced by a new generation. This could have been the fate of our beloved monsters if Uncle Forry hadn't insisted on howling out for them and showcasing the talented monster makers.

In 1932, *Amazing Stories* magazine – jumped off the shelf! Grabbed hold of Forry and said, "Take me home little boy – you will love me!" What a remarkable thing! An 11-year-old boy who underwent that life-changing experience then grew up to provide the same revelation, 26 years later, for a new generation of youngsters. And to be sure, "Monster Kids" who discovered their dreams in the pages of the original *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine have gone on to provide that same experience of discovery for modern generations through monster-related movies, literature and art. When Forrest J Ackerman sat down to write the very first issue of *Famous Monsters*, it was with his mythical "sense of wonder" intact, at a time when horror was not an obvious subject for a 1958 mag. Visionary publisher James Warren saw it as a great business opportunity. Editor Forry loved the idea of a pulpit from which he could spread the "gross-pel" of Sci-Fi, Fantasy and Horror. Maybe Forry didn't set out to be a trailblazer, but that's exactly what his editorship of FM made him. At a time when other movie magazines featured glamour shots of stars and posed production photos, Forry was shining a spotlight on the people behind the camera. The men and women who actually made the monsters we fell in love with. Rick Baker "Monster Maker" decided to give up an education in medicine once he learned that the people who made monsters were not mad doctors but in fact makeup artists. Inspired by FM, a young Steven Spielberg wrapped his sisters in toilet paper and made his first mummy movie. A teenaged Guillermo del Toro once wrote a letter begging Forry to adopt him. Stephen King sent Forry his first story, *The Killer*, when King was only 14 years old. What ambition or madcap experiment did Forry and FM inspire in you? The "big bang" that was *Famous Monsters of Filmland* has been well documented, but "Forry Acker-seed" was already sowing the seeds of our genre before the idea of *Famous Monsters* was even a twinkle in his blue eyes.

As a native California boy, in 1932, Forry snatched up that first *Amazing Stories* magazine and ran with it. He didn't just read that pulp voraciously, he wrote to the magazine publishers, authors and any fellow readers he could draw a bead on. Just like fans of today, Forry couldn't get enough of the stuff he loved. And in those olden days, genre periodicals were as scarce as Pterodactyl Pteeth (thanks 4e). So, Forry weathered the drought of available material by establishing some of the first amateur fanzines of the time and by writing faithfully, sometimes daily, to pen pals who shared his interests in all things fantastic. You see, even as a kid in the 30's, Forry was at the forefront of creating networks of fans and pros alike; all so that there was activity to fill the space between issues of his favorite mags. Fanzines and pen pals were like an old-school



Photo courtesy Forrest J Ackerman Trust

Internet – keeping the few fans in the world that found each other in the pen & ink loop. Back in the day, Forry waited for letters the way we anticipate important e-mails. In that long ago era, for a nickel's postage, mail was delivered twice a day. You can bet Forry's mailbox was always full. And the "kids" that Forry befriended grew up to be familiar figures like legendary American author Ray Bradbury, special effects pioneer Ray Harryhausen and Forry's oldest friend (FM photog), the late Walt Daugherty. Forry was always a mentor, supporting and promoting his talented group of friends. Ray Bradbury has often said that if there hadn't been a Forry Ackerman, there wouldn't have been a Ray Bradbury. Forry's contemporaries were the likes of Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, A.E. van Vogt, L. Ron Hubbard and just about everyone involved in "Speculative Fiction" (a clunky term we might still be using if Forry hadn't thankfully coined "Sci-Fi" in 1954)!

I first learned of Forry like many of you: as a kid in the 60s. I read FM religiously. I discovered other kids like myself through the pages of the magazine. I'm still best friends with many of those childhood friends. So, why the fascination with Horror movies and monsters? For me and many of my peers, it is far from just a hobby, and FM was more than just an entertainment. It was a reference guide, a "how-to" manual for the work we dreamt of doing someday. Forry knew that horror movies represented more craft than any other genre

There are so many design elements, special effects and so much creativity involved in bringing a monster to life on screen; a heightened level of artistry in general, so it seemed natural that a passionate love of movies would lead a starry-eyed kid to the genre. The craft of moviemaking was never as ripe, engaging and rich as in Sci-Fi, Fantasy and Horror movies. To this day, there just seems to be more magic in genre movies. Forry was always delighted by the remnants of horror movie making. He was excavating crumbling rubber and plaster relics long before there was a cultural appreciation for these abandoned props.

So, in effect Forry's fascination with movies also spawned the serious business of "collecting." And Forry ended up with the foremost collection of memorabilia in the world because of his vision and appreciation for the art, literature and objects that represented the height of stage and screen craft. Each piece he collected was a tangible connection to the movies that we love. In this way Forry did more than just honor moviemakers. He established a value for the by-products of their work; dinosaurs and other props that would have been lost if Ack hadn't rescued them from obscurity. Stills and ephemera that were never meant to live beyond the opening of a film went into filing cabinets for posterity. The collecting hobby is a multi-million dollar industry today. That Forry could amass so many fantastic objects is not half as impressive as Forry's generosity in sharing these things with fans every day of his life and always for free! No, the genre is more than a hobby. And the genre fan is a special breed. Most fans I've met consider themselves filmmakers, aspiring filmmakers or at least highly literate and sophisticated audience members. Horror fans want to participate in and contribute to their genre. To the best of my knowledge, coin and stamp collectors rarely have any ambition to mint coins or produce stamps.



Forry and Wendayne Ackerman.

Still, we haven't scratched the surface of Forry's life and times. For now, I wanted to accomplish a couple of important things. First, to lend my passionate support to the publisher and editor of the "new" FM by reminding my fellow fans of what an incredibly important "bible" the original mag was for some special kids that turned out pretty darn well! Those "kids" rule pop-culture today; Tim Burton, George Lucas, James Cameron, Bryan Singer, Penn & Teller and others I've mentioned previously – all began as Monster Kids. Would they exist in a world without monsters? Maybe. Maybe not. Secondly, I wanted to point out that Forry Ackerman was an innovator and mentor long before FM existed. This point is most important to me because I believe that by observing the history and evolution of a man who "made" FM, the magical impact of the original mag can be recaptured in this new incarnation. And what could be better than a magical monster magazine in today's tough world that jumps off a shelf, grabs hold of us and demands, "Take me home friend, you will love me – and you too can create things that people will love! You can make movies!" In movies we tell breathtaking stories, teach profound lessons and live forever. And so, **Forrest J Ackerman Shall Not Die!**

Dear Uncle Forry

A call was heard across the globe by fans of our beloved Uncle Forry – take a minute and write your Uncle a last letter, telling him what he meant to you. The response was overwhelming. We couldn't print all of them here so we chose, at random, a collection of letters and will do what we can to have the rest of them – as well as these – on the ***Famous Monsters*** *website in the coming weeks.*

– Jessie Lilley

I am happy beyond words that *Famous Monsters of Filmland* is back. It has been a long time since I have been excited about a magazine, and this, as edited by Forry Ackerman, in the early days was just pure magic for me!

But for those of you, who may not have been around during the glory years of the magazine, this longtime FM reader is going to take you in my time machine to tell you what it was like.

Photo courtesy Forrest J Ackerman Trust

I have a personal reason for loving FM, and as it turned out, Forry was my best friend for 34 years. I have told this story many times and heard the greats, such as John Landis and Joe Dante, tell stories very similar to mine.

When my father was in the Air Force, he was stationed in Tripoli, Libya. In 1966, my brother, mother and I flew out there to join him. When I arrived, my father told me he was taking me to the base to get ice cream and get me anything I wanted. "Anything you want, I will buy for you." Those were his words.

When we got there, we had the promised ice cream and then he took me to the back of the restaurant where there was a newsstand. It was just a little room, but it was a magical world filled with magazines, books and paperback books. I was like a kid in a candy store with so many goodies. So many books and so many magazines! I remember seeing covers by Frank Frazetta and Jim Bama, Perry Mason books and magazines galore. It was my portal to the US of A(ckerman).

Much like Forry when he saw his first issue of *Amazing Stories*, *Famous Monsters* leapt out and caught my eye. It was issue #36 with the cover of the one-eyed mummy from *The Mummy's Ghost*. My heart was racing as I grabbed it and told my dad that was what I wanted. To this day, I can tell you page by page all that was in that issue. Well, when I got home my mom saw it and was shocked. She immediately told me to throw it away telling me that I would have bad dreams! Oh, you never saw such a sad kid as I was that day when I had to throw it away. But of course, we know now that parents are only doing what they thought was right. "You will have bad dreams, Jimmy!" More on that later.

Over the years, I managed to read the magazine and of course started buying the issues starting with the 1969 Boris Karloff Tribute issue, #56. And then, in the 100th issue, my brother Jeff and I had our names printed in the magazine. Talk about excited! I was on cloud nine!

I would go to the stores and the Air Force base exchange, constantly looking for the magazine. I would even stand near the person putting out the magazines until I saw the new FM issue. It was an event to get the magazine because I looked forward to reading each issue from cover to cover! My biggest regret is that I didn't buy 2 of each issue.

It was a magazine that was unlike any other magazine at the time. It was the first of its kind; unique, magical. It was a magazine that told us everything we needed to know about the movies of yesteryear – the Universal Monsters in the glory days of monster movies; Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Lon Chaney Sr. and Lon Chaney Jr.

FM was about the wonderful movies that came from Hammer Studios; the wickedly sinister Christopher Lee as Dracula and the Frankenstein creature; the deliciously mad Dr. Frankenstein in countless movies as played by Peter Cushing, an actor also well loved as Dr. Van Helsing, the man who forever battled Christopher Lee's Dracula. Hammer was the studio whose films so delighted us that their lush colors and production values are forever burned into our brains

We learned about George Pal, Ray Harryhausen, Fritz Lang, Val Lewton, James Whale and so many others. We didn't just learn about the actors and actresses in these movies, we also learned about the people behind the scenes; directors, producers, writers, special effects people, the make-up people, the musicians – all of the magicians of the film world.

FM was there to entertain as well as educate, about the movies that we came to love over the years. Of course, it wasn't only about the past, but also about the current and future; we read about up-and-coming talents who would go on to become well known in the world of horror, fantasy and sci-fi films of today! Names like Spielberg and Dante are only two that were discussed in the original FM.

Most every cover was just an exquisite work of art; pure magic! When we first would get our claws on the magazine, we would see the cover and just be in awe of the art. It whets the appetite for the issue at hand! My personal favorite artist was the amazing Basil Gogos. His covers, one of which graces this new incarnation of FM, were a tour de force of imagination. Vincent Price, Boris Karloff, Peter Cushing and so many others; totally different from any other covers that you would see during this time. The Gogos covers conveyed the mood of the person or film; not cartoons – more fine art. My personal favorite Gogos was the Frankenstein creature on the memorial tribute to Boris Karloff; a poignant cover that will touch you – I know it did me.

And what was it that gave FM its heart? FORREST J (no period) ACKERMAN!

Forry, the creator of the term sci-fi, was the genius behind the magazine. Each issue was lovingly put together for our enjoyment via his keen sense of knowing what we would want to know about the films. He understood that the lovers of these movies didn't just want pictures, they wanted everything. With his vast knowledge, he was able to thrill us with every morsel of information that he could throw at us.

During this time in the early seventies, my mother eventually realized that the magazine didn't harm me and she was happy that I knew so much about the movies and the people who made them. So for Christmas in 1973, she bought me all the back issues that I did not have! This was the greatest gift she could have given me; I loved her so much for that and I still have the issues.

I wrote a letter to Forry telling him about my mom doing this and he published it in the King Kong issue #108 with a delightful reply. A few days later, my mom tells me, I had

a phone call and it was none other than Forry himself! We had a wonderful chat over the phone. I was mesmerized by his stories; a week later, he sent me several letters in bright neon colors with articles by him and a book inscribed by him: "Yesterday, today, to Morrow – to Jim! After his inscription he noted: "2074." He was that kind of guy.

He had my picture put in issue # 110. For the next 34 years, he was my best friend; the first adult other than my parents that took an interest in me. I was 17 years old and just in awe of him. We chatted over the phone once a month for most of those years. I can still hear his voice and his hearty laugh. He had a delightful laugh. He would tell me about what new projects he was working on; new issues – he was just a fascinating man – and he was always interested in what I was doing at the time.

I first met him at the WorldCon in Miami Beach. He gave me the biggest bear hug when we saw each other and of course he was wearing the Lugosi ring! I asked if I could try it on. He said, "Why yes, of course you may." As I put it on my finger, he said, "Of course, if you can't get it off, that's another finger added to my collection!" What a chuckle we had over that.

I finally visited the Ackermansion during Forry's birthday party in 1986. That was a thrill that I just cannot describe to you. His home was a place filled with so many things that I had seen in the movies. Every space was filled with amazing items that took my breath away! I loved to go to his office downstairs. It was just crammed with letters, pictures, figurines and so many things. I used to go there often just to get a sense of what it was like for him to work down there. I visited him many, many times over the years and always was in awe of his collection. More than that, though, I loved him.

I remember two Famous Monsters Conventions from the 90's; Forry never turned away a fan. It did not matter how old they were; he took his time with young and old kids alike. A Pied Piper with all of these people following him; always patient with each and every one of them – the reason was that he knew what it was like to be a fan, still being a fan himself. I miss Forry every day; there isn't one that goes by that I don't think about him. I miss puns; his laugh; our many conversations; his advice and most of all, I miss his friendship.

When Phil Kim bought the rights to *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, I know Forry was happy about it. He told me he wanted to see it come back again and gave Kim his blessing. This is what I have wanted to see for years. I'm quite excited – like a little kid again. And who will be inspired by the new rendition of FM, whose original editor knew more than anyone that imagination and dreams know no limits?

Perhaps YOU!!

– Jim Morrow

We were privileged to have Forrest J Ackerman imprint his ghoulish hands in our Vista Theatre forecourt in Los Angeles along with iconic animator Ray Harryhausen in 1994. Both were on hand for a screening of *Jason and the Argonauts* with Mr. Ackerman as MC. Forry signed our guest list many times at the Vista "FJA" and once in a while "SCI FI" and it was always a pleasure to hear his up-to-date report and specialized sense of humor. As a kid growing up in the Midwest, I never imagined that not only would I meet the Ackermonster, but actually have him as one of our permanent theater residents. Truth is definitely greater than fiction. Best wishes to the new FM team!

– Lance Alspaugh

My girlfriend and I met Forry for the first time at a screening of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* at the Nuart Theatre in Los Angeles in October 2002. Forry invited us to visit him at Ackermansion. We could not visit him until later date, but we ran into Forry at special events and screenings at the Egyptian Theatre many times. We finally managed to visit him on July 15 and 19, 2006. Both times he took us to his favorite restaurant "House of Pie" for lunch. He told us all those fascinating stories about SciFi and old Hollywood. We now live in Japan, but we will never forget him and his kindness.

– Tomoyuki Inoue

I have my friend Doug to thank. One fine mid-60s summer day he came running up to my house with a letter clutched in his fevered hand. He was speechless. I read the letter. I couldn't believe it myself... it was an invitation for him and a companion to visit the ACKERMANSION! It wasn't long after that we made our visit and met the man himself. FJA's house was really like a museum. We wandered its magical halls for an hour. I think I might have taken one or two breaths the whole time. There was stuff lying on the floor that I would have given up a body part for! FJA was a great guy, too. The irony of this tale was that, despite the gracious invite, my friend's letter had been critical of *Famous Monsters* for being too much like a kiddy magazine!

– John Navroth

We had a monster party for my daughter, Leatrice. It was her fourth birthday. While preparing for it, we saw that a convention was coming up, so my wife fixed up the costume a little more and when the day came around, we took Leatrice to the con.

It was Saturday, and we all went. The costume contest didn't go on until later in the day and it was also running late. Leatrice and I were standing stage right when Al Lewis came up to me and introduced himself. He asked Leatrice's name. I

told him and also told him she was falling asleep. Mr. Lewis went and got her a folding chair and as she sat down he said, "Hey Leatrice. You want some orange juice?" She did and he went to the bar and got her some. She drank it and was okay after that. He then told me he'd bring her up first for the contest and went out on stage to begin. He said, "Our first contestant is Leatrice." He brought her out on stage and then took her hand and led her across the stage to another chair he had set up. The entire audience was up and clapping as they paraded to that chair.

The place was packed. The high school she ended up attending – Burroughs High – had their band there and they were playing all kinds of Monster Music. When Leatrice and Mr. Lewis were walking across the stage together, the band was playing the theme from *Frankenstein*. It was so surreal, and I admit that tears came to my eyes.

One by one the other contestants came up and displayed their costumes. Once everyone had been seen, Mr. Lewis had everyone clap for their favorite costume and guess who got the most applause? Leatrice! Oh, some people said she only won because she was so cute, but my wife had made that costume from scratch and I think the hair was the best part. She made it out of foam and put white fur on it. There were a million flashes going off, and Frankenstein's Monster had come from Universal Studios, so they took pictures together of him and his tiny bride. Finally, it was time to meet Uncle Forry. We went over to him and he gave Leatrice the $25 prize. Then, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a fifty-dollar bill and gave her that as well. The only reason he did that, as far as I can tell, was because he was such a great guy and it was an awfully nice thing to do! Then we had our picture taken with our Uncle Forry and also with Al Lewis. The theme of the show was *Frankenstein Marries the Bride*. On Sunday there was a "wedding" and Leatrice fit right in. I will never forget that day. It was such a thrill.

– Glenn Roger Innocent



Everyone's favorite Grandpa, Al Lewis, with young "Bride" Leatrice Innocent.

Photo courtesy Glenn Roger Innocent

Me and my girl Jane met Uncle 4e years back in Atlanta at Dragoncon. He was set up at a table with the other stars. As we approached I felt like a 8-year-old kid again while she was like "Who's this?" After getting an amazing 8x10 signed for myself, she noticed the rings on his fingers. Yes, those rings! As only Uncle 4e could, he took the time not only to show her the rings but tell the stories of whose they were and how he had gotten them! As we walked away, I told her that this convention (and many others) would not exist if it had not been for that man! Needless to say from that day on, she had met her new uncle as well!

– Jim Wright

Every month I couldn't wait for the latest issue of *Famous Monsters* to show up on the shelves of my small-town grocery store. I kept each issue and perused them from cover to cover to glean every detail about monster movies that I had seen and those that I hoped to see on the Acri Creature Feature (the only source in rural Illinois for the cinematic thrills I was seeking). Besides the wonderful stills of the incredible make-up and costumes, Forry's humor also kept me entranced. I also dreamed of someday visiting the Ackermansion collection and meeting my hero in person. For Forry's 87th birthday, I made that happen for my family. We traveled to L.A. to attend the celebration and meet him; joining other more notable of his friends like John Landis, Curtis Harrington, George Clayton Johnson and Ann Robinson. Forry influenced me to create a gallery of monsters (including autographed memorabilia and rare FM covers) and sci-fi displays in my orthodontic practice for my patients to enjoy. Although the Ackermansion was gone by the time we met Forry, we were able to make a unique pilgrimage to Skywalker Ranch and Lucasfilm, something that my hero never was able to do. I remember Forrest J Ackerman as a significant influence in my life.

– Dr. Jay Bowman

I remember visiting 4E back in the late 80's. He was doing an TV interview in the dungeon. Wendayne made me a peanut butter sandwich with a glass of milk. After the interview and tour of the Ackermansion, 4E asked if I had a request. I brought a list with me of FMs I was missing. I mentioned to him to let me know how much the issues would cost. Two weeks after I got home a box arrived and inside were the issues he mailed me. When I called him to ask how much I owed him, he said they were a gift. To this day I still have my FMs. 4E was definitely one of a kind; a true angel.

– Alison Cox

I was in high school in the 1960's. My dad had just bought me a little tape recorder. Fay Wray was on *The Today Show*, I believe, and I recorded the audio. Having been a *Famous*

Monsters fan since I first found it on the newsstands in the early 60's, I typed up the interview and sent it to FM. In a short time, I received a personal thank you from Forry, with a German playbill for *King Kong!* And get this! My name was included as a contributing editor for two issues (which I, of course, still have!) Forry gave that teenager the thrill of his life.

– Bill Melton

I met Forry at the old Hollywood Masquers Club on North Sycamore in Hollywood at a rare production of the Karel Čapek play R.U.R. (*Rossum's Universal Robots*) sometime in the early 1980's (sorry I can't be more precise). I did the music and effects for the play and invited my friend Dave "Moxie" Gibson, a comic book and record collector, as my guest on opening night. Forry was invited by the play's director, who really didn't know him or expect him to show up; but he did and it turned out that Dave Gibson knew him well and he introduced Forry to all of us. I remember being tongue-tied at meeting such an awesome hero (I was a major FM fan as a kid) and Forry was gracious and said he enjoyed the production (which wasn't really that good), once again proving himself a true fan!

– Rich La Bonte

I was working at I-Con XIV, a sci-fi convention on Long Island in 1995. Forry was a guest of honor, and I got to speak to him briefly in between running around like a chicken with its head cut off (he let me touch Lugosi's Ring). At the awards banquet, I arrived late and grabbed some of the food that was left. There were no more seats so I was going to sit on the floor to eat when Forry sees I have nowhere to sit. He waves me over and makes everyone shift over to fit me in so I had a seat. I got to eat dinner with Forry, David Kyle and Julius Schwartz. Forry and the gang were so kind to me, I'll never forget that. That's my Forry memory.

– John Sheehan

I remember one of 4E's Saturday open houses at the Ackermansion. I was early and found not just myself but director John Landis waiting for the gates to open. I thought– only 4E could keep John cooling his heels waiting for the show!

– Dave Doering

As a young kid, Forry represented something that seemed impossible: a cool adult. My first encounter with Forry was when I was six and I'd found some issues of *Famous Monsters* brought in to the preschool my dad owned. I copied some of the monster photos inside and asked my dad to send my drawings to the magazine.

I forgot about them pretty much the moment they were sent off. What I got back was a nice letter from Forry and some stills of more monsters to draw. This meant a lot to me. It was at a time where I was discovering my love of art and monsters. Forry's encouragement reaffirmed that it was ok to like both.

– Jace Witman

To us middle-aged Monster Kids, Uncle Forry was the adult who understood us because he was one of us! That childhood fascination with Sci-Fi and Horror never left him. His love for the genre was contagious and that's what drew us to him. We recognize our own kind when we see them!

– Jeff Preston

1967 – The Netherlands: I was about 16 years old when I discovered *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. At that time I honestly believed I was the only person alive – certainly in my own country – even remotely interested in monsters.

Well, this amazing publication proved me wrong and I became a faithful FM fanatic. I bought each and every issue and even fell in love with its editor, Forrest J Ackerman. When I saw the photos of the Ackermansion – and found out it was even possible to visit Uncle Forry and take the tour – but there I was, living some 10.000 kilometers away from Karloffornia.

1975 – Hollyweird, Karloffornia. I couldn't believe it. There I was, staying in some Hollywood hotel, phone in hand, phonebook open – and there it was: Uncle Forry's phone number. A couple of hours later I was on the doorstep of the Ackermansion and Mr. Ackerman himself opened the door. And it wasn't even Saturday! Who was I to know he only opened his home to the fans on that particular day. He warmly shook my hand and kindly allowed me to roam around his mansion all by myself, as he was busy – maybe putting together the next issue of FM? The next couple of hours were the most amazing ever: the photos of the Ackermansion, firmly imprinted on my memory, came to life right in front of my eyes. From rooms filled with books and magazines to props to models to...well, you name it: the Kong skeleton; Maria from metropolis – all there, within touching distance – and in the background, my hero, Uncle Forry.

He kindly signed an issue of FM and phoned a cab to pick me up.

Never will I forget that day, some 35 years ago.

– Siep Kuijpers

Forry started everything for me. Starting with his magazine which I discovered when I was 9 (which a friend introduced me to, leading to my first copy from the drugstore I biked to, #95) led to the main hobby in my life – watching SF/horror films, reading SF/horror film mags, and joining the CHFB. But more important than that was Forry's influence to never use drugs or alcohol for a high, and his atheistic standpoint was also a huge influence. All of these things simply made me a very open-minded person, and I owe him for that.

– Ray Steele

When I was a young lad of twelve or so my mother was into ceramics. It may have been younger, but I think that this is a pretty good guess. Downtown Vicksburg had a few shops, but this one huge building housed the local ceramics shop. I would go with her and help clean flash off of ceramics, glaze a few things and maybe paint something if the mood struck me. It was fun, but not an all-consuming kind of thing to a kid.

Anyway, it was a cool, summer night and very few street lights were on. At the time Vicksburg was not all that populated and there wasn't much business in town with the exception of a few factories on the outskirts.

So, I had tired quickly of the ceramics scene and I went outside to sit on the huge front steps and pull a magazine out of my back pocket. It was an issue of *Famous Monsters*. In particular the article that grabbed my attention was one about the Boris Karloff film *The Ghoul*. Now remember that this was around 1970 or so, so there weren't a lot of the blood-filled gore flicks that we have today. Add to that the fact of the black-and-white pictures having more of an impact on my young mind. I think they seemed more real to me somehow. And the monstrous make up that Boris had coupled with a pretty terrifying storyline that the magazine went into in great detail and I was pretty wound up. I ended up going back into the ceramics place and see how much longer my mom was going to be. The light-filled building helped to chase the heebie-jeebies away, but when I looked out the huge windows of the front of the store I could see that the night was still out there, waiting for me. And, who knows, maybe *The Ghoul* was waiting as well.

Ever since then I always think on that night and it brings me a nostalgic sense of peace and makes me realize why I love a good horror movie. I know that you have to go, Forry, but I'm a selfish person and would rather you didn't. The world will seem so much emptier without the one great Forry Ackerman to remind us of why we love fantastic cinema.

I love you Forry.

– Douglas Waltz



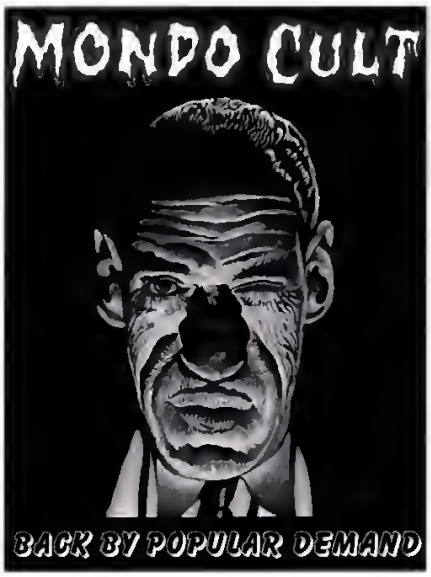
Forry's last birthday party in November 2008, with friends Ray Bradbury, Tom DeSanto and Kerry O'Quinn.

Photo courtesy of Kerry O'Quinn.

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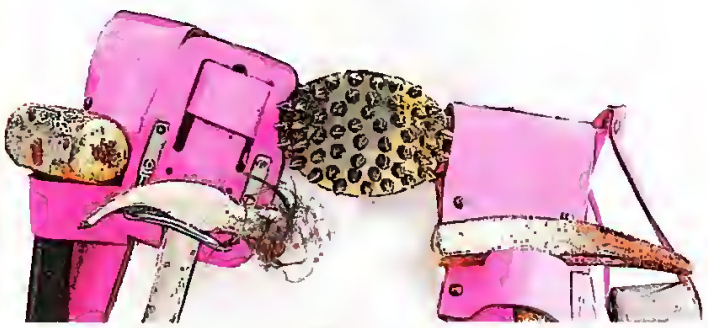


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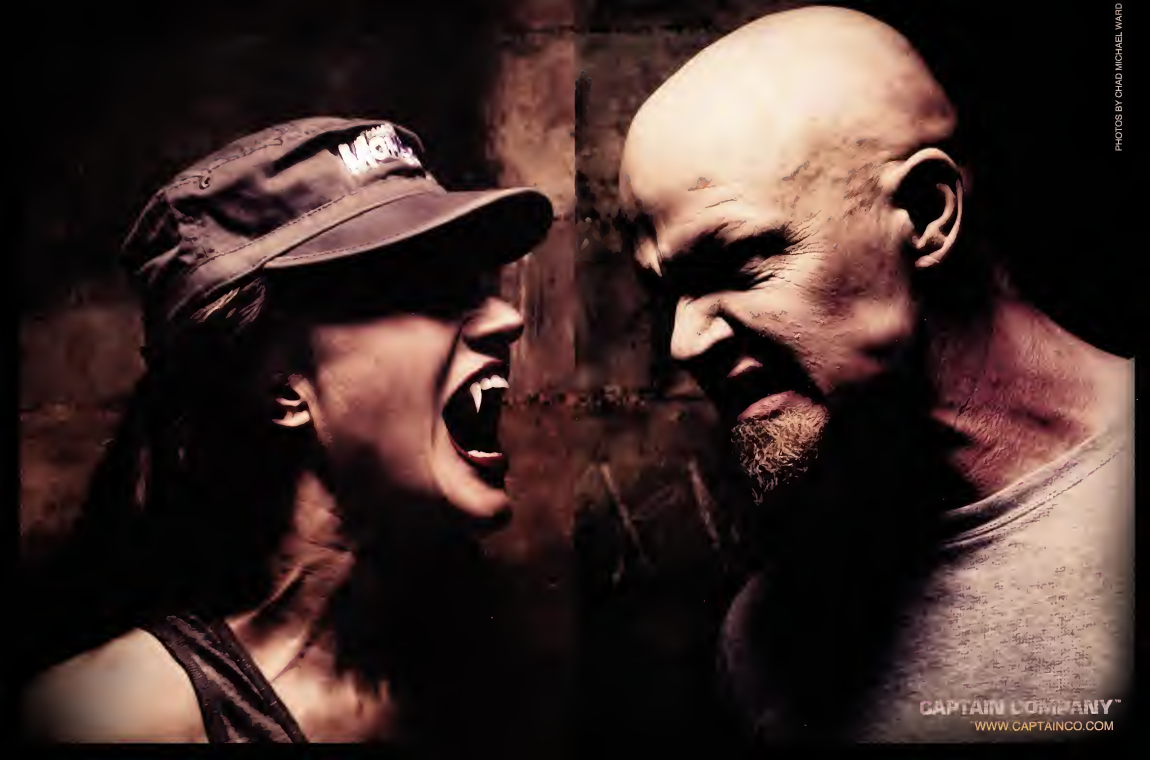
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Chad Michael Ward is a wartime refugee hiding out in the wilds of Los Angeles, CA. Armed with nothing more than a battered camera and a sense for the macabre, Ward fuels his creativity with equal parts misanthropy and wicked delight in an attempt to bring his brand of darkness to the unwashed masses.

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(a)



(b)


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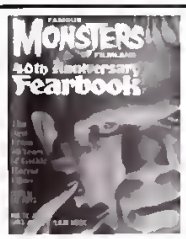
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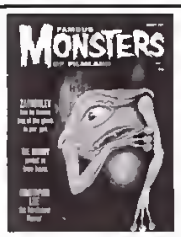


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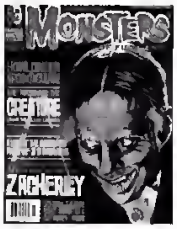


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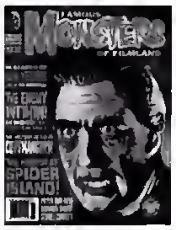


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It has become, if not exactly a cliché, certainly a well-worn habit to note the passing of an idol with the words "I wouldn't be here if not for..." ...but there isn't a single doubt in my mind that I, and many of my friends and colleagues, wouldn't be doing what we're doing without the inspiration provided by the boundless imagination and incredible talents of **Frank Frazetta.**

The image below has been my favorite of his paintings since I was 12 years old and, like all true art, looks as fresh to me as the day I first saw it.



Thank you, Frank, for taking me on such a vivid ride into your world. It was a trip I'll never forget.

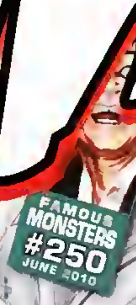
– Michael Heisler

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Hammer Films! Clive Barker's NIGHTBREED! The restored METROPOLIS! Joe Hill! Bill Selby! Moebius Monster Models! FM Beauty Contest winners! The second part of William Stout's cover mural! And MORE, in the pages of this, the World's Greatest Monster Fan Magazine! (I've been waiting a long time to say that!)

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